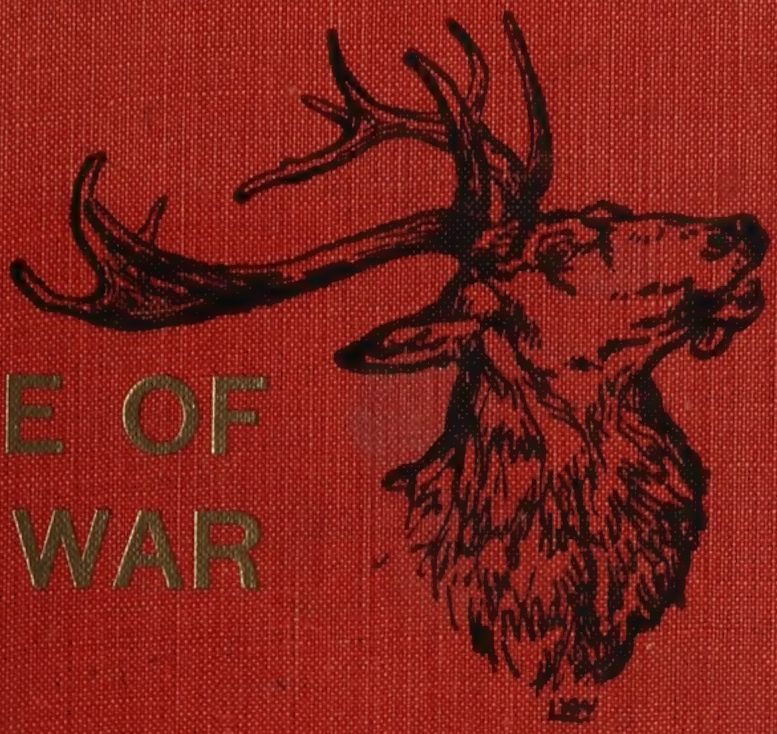
THE IMAGE OF WAR



A SPORTING AUTOBIOGRAPHY

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The Image of War

THE CHASE OF THE WILD DEER.

The Image of War

A Sporting Autobiography

BY

"SNAFFLE"

AUTHOR OF 'THE ROE-DEER,' ETC.

WITH FRONTISPIECE AND COVER DESIGN
BY LUCY KEMP-WELCH

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(*BY PERMISSION*)

TO HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS

DOM MIGUEL,

DUKE OF BRAGANZA.

PREFACE.

THE question — "Why not write your autobiography?"—that was put to me not long ago, is one calculated to give any of us a shock, reminding us, as it does, that we have reached the age when life lies not so much before us as behind us. Yet, though I am old enough to have seen, if not to remember, the army that was on its way to win Solferino; and to recollect distinctly the sight of the wounded who had been brought back from the earthworks of Düppel; to have dined with people so well known in the remote past as Taglioni and Jenny Lind, Mr Roebuck and General Türr; and even to have met, as a boy does, Marshal Prim and Cavour, John Delane, and "the Old Shekarry," I cannot feel that I have yet attained my anecdotage.

Nevertheless, it occurred to me that, like Whyte-Melville, "the best of my fun, I owe it to horse and to hound"; and that I am scarcely likely to add much more to my experience with these or with the rifle. So that a book containing the most notable of my sporting memories might be allowable—and final. As such I offer it to the reader.

As for my title: "Hunting," said Mr Jorrocks, "is the image of war without its guilt and with five-and-twenty per cent less danger"; and I have ventured to extend the aphorism to sport with the rifle, in which a man may often carry his life in his hand, even though his quarry be the most harmless of animals. I am fortunately able to say that my own worst injury, so far, has been a bullet through the brim of my hat!

To these two subjects alone the following pages relate, with the exception of the first chapter and the last, which describe certain experiences in what is commonly called the supernatural: whether accurately so styled the reader can decide for himself.

SNAFFLE.

LLANDOGO, MON.,
January 1, 1914.

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ERRATA.

P. 106. *For* "advantage" *read* "disadvantage."
P. 217. *For* "reasonable" *read* "seasonable."
P. 312. *For* "tore" *read* "rose."

THE IMAGE OF WAR.

CHAPTER I.

IN THE JUNGLE.

To those who have never experienced it, the idea of existence in an atmosphere not differing greatly from that of an orchid-house — a perpetual damp heat, with the thermometer never, by day or night, in winter or summer, under 76 degrees—does not seem enticing. Nevertheless, there were compensations, and, looking back to it over the gulf of years spent in different lands, when the minor miseries of existence are forgotten, we cannot but own that we passed some very happy days after all in equatorial regions. Looking back thus, there is even a pleasant memory of those many evenings spent in mess verandahs, beneath which the great seas, straight from the Antarctic ice, broke incessantly in monotonous thunder, though it must be confessed that they were excessively tedious at the time. But this was at a garrison far enough from any jungle at all. It is useless to attempt to conceal the exact locality of my tropical experiences, so that I may

as well own that I gained them in the great island of Ceylon, and that the garrison referred to is the capital, Colombo. Within reach of that, by road, there was no real jungle, though there were quaint and unsophisticated spots where the rice-fields and cocoa-nut groves were interspersed with little clumps of woodland. Of such was the rest-house of Watuwa, if I remember the name right. These rest-houses are the Ceylon equivalent of the Indian dawk-bungalow, but generally they are more civilised. It is not the rule in Ceylon, as it is in India, for the traveller to carry about his own bedding. To be sure, except in the hill-country, all he can want in that way is a sheet to lie on. Generally, however, the rest-house provides board and lodging. The former is primitive, and the usual bill of fare is spatchcock and egg-curry. The Indian dawk-bungalow fowl has been made the subject of numerous articles by far abler pens; still, I doubt if an experience of mine at a small rest-house on the east coast of Ceylon has often been equalled. Soon after my arrival there the usual sounds at the back had led me to understand my dinner was being "chivied" round the outbuildings. Enter presently, breathless, the rest-house keeper:

"Please, master—master got gun?"

"Yes."

"Please, master shooting that *coli*" (fowl).

The rooster in question had so positively declined the invitation to "come and be killed" as to get sufficiently far up a tree to baffle the pursuit of mine host and his assistants. And shoot him I did, seeing no probability of getting my dinner in any other way.

Some of the rest-houses were almost hotels in comfort. One of the best known was that at Bentota, half-way between Galle—then the mail-steamer port—and Colombo. It was celebrated for its oysters, and people used to go there to revel in oyster-curry. Prawn-curry, "the" Ceylon dish, is, to my mind, better, but both are, with reason, suspected of being dangerous food at times. Why one oyster should cause dysentery more than another it is hard to say, and medical science has so far failed to prove, though a suggestion has been made as to the state of the moon, and, consequently, of the tide. Another rest-house connected in my mind with oysters was that of Welligama, a dozen or more miles east of Galle. In the bay there were islets covered with oysters, and there we used to sit and devour dozens, which a native knocked off the rocks and opened for us.

I have, however, taken the reader a long way from the Watuwa rest-house. Though not, as I have said, in the jungle, it was at any rate sufficiently countrified in its surroundings to afford a pleasant change from the capital. I and a friend of like tastes made several expeditions from Colombo to this pretty little place, ostensibly for the purpose of snipe-shooting, though I cannot say our bags were ever very heavy. (They certainly ought to have been if there is anything in a name, for *kaswatuwa* is Cingalese for a snipe.) It was, however, a sufficient pleasure to walk through the fields, getting, at all events, occasional shots, and in the meanwhile admiring, without injuring, the many beautiful birds with which the Ceylon low country abounds. The commonest kingfisher of Ceylon is a homely-looking black and white bird, but there is another with a huge red triangular bill,

whose brown head is about the only sober-coloured part of him. When he moves he is one flash of brilliant hues. So is the bee-eater. The golden oriole is another beautiful and common bird, as are the numerous barbets, parrakeets, and green pigeons. The white paddy-bird, a kind of dwarf heron, gives a relief everywhere to the masses of green, and at times the sombre black-and-brown jungle-crow takes wing from a thick clump of bushes, presenting in his flight a singular resemblance to a dwarf cock-pheasant. Wild animals there are none in these cultivated districts, save the hare, but reptiles are well represented, the most uncommon ones to European eyes being the huge *cabragoya* lizards. The edible iguana (*tallagoya*) is more rare.

So far, I seem to have carefully avoided the jungle I sat down to write about. Now, let me repair my error. The first place in which I ever came into close contact therewith was Kandy, where we had in those days a detachment. I was the junior of its officers, and consequently the last for choice of quarters. Those that were left me in the town itself being very inferior, I turned my attention elsewhere, and discovered, high up on a hill called the Western Redoubt, a little low house which had once been appropriated as commissariat officers' quarters. The little place fascinated me, and I easily obtained leave to occupy it. I shall probably have occasion hereafter to describe it more in detail. Suffice it to say that no house ever could have been more thoroughly in the jungle. A shelf of the hill, planted as a garden, ran some two yards in front of the house and along its side, but behind came the jungle, and the only communication with the outer world consisted of a couple

of jungle paths running down the hill, one wide enough for a carriage, but very steep.

Strange to say, the bulk of the Ceylon jungle consists, in the Central Province at least, of an exotic plant. This is the so-called lantana, which was introduced as a botanic experiment from the Straits Settlements within the memory of living man. It is a low-growing shrub, rarely more than seven or eight feet high, with reddish, sickly-smelling flowers. Mr Rudyard Kipling has described the extraordinary rapidity with which the South Indian jungle swallows up cultivated land once it has been left to Nature. Nothing, however, to my mind equals the rapidity with which the lantana grows. To the southward of my bungalow I had had some poles of land cleared for a cinchona nursery — in those days, the very latest Ceylon idea. No sooner was the land done with than the jungle began to swallow it up again, and I am afraid to write in how few weeks—I might almost say days—all trace of man's handiwork there was lost.

An impenetrable lantana jungle, then, surrounded my bungalow. Before it, it ran down to the town a couple of hundred yards below; but behind there were hundreds of acres of it, indeed thousands. Here and there a tall cotton-tree, areca palm, or wild mango broke the dead level. But the mass of the vegetation was this same plant, so thickly serried that no member of my household ever went a yard behind the house, for the simple reason that to do so he must have first made his road with a billhook. That the jungle was not untenanted, the sharp bark of the muntjac (known in Ceylon as the red deer) which often broke the silence of the night, proved. By the way, the words "silence of the night" must only be taken relatively

in connection with a tropical jungle. There Nature is never still. Even dismissing such distressing, but not constant, noises as the head-splitting whirr of the knife-grinder beetle, continued hour after hour, there is that hum and stir of insect and animal life which must be heard to be appreciated. A few weeks after my last departure from Ceylon it fell to my lot to walk, at about 3 A.M., the then lonely road which leads from Farnborough to Aldershot. There was something about it other than the extreme darkness of the winter night that I failed to understand. Nor was it till the sharp bark of a fox close to me made me literally jump, that I realised it was the silence. Utter, absolute silence I had not experienced for years.

Besides the muntjac, the jungle contained pig, porcupine, hares, and the gorgeous jungle-fowl. But they were safe enough. The particular hill is mentioned by Emerson Tennant, who, I suppose, is still the authority on the island, as the most snake-infested in Ceylon. I certainly never saw but one there, and that was a common rat-snake, such as is to be found in every Ceylon bungalow. This, however, proves nothing. In my experience, every snake, other than the dreaded *tic-polonga* (*Daboia Russelli*) flees at the presence of man. (So, by the way, does every wild animal I have ever seen, except the buffalo and the Ceylon bear.) The *tic* does not because it is as sluggish as its bite is deadly. The booted tread of the European is generally audible to the snake, and this is the reason that cases of snake-bite are almost exclusively confined to the barefooted native. My servants never went out at night without a lantern.

I need hardly say my experience of jungle at this time was by no means confined to my surroundings. All the coffee[1] estates have blocks of virgin forest of greater or less extent belonging to them, and still larger ones are reserved by the Crown; and Kandy lies in the centre, if not of all the coffee districts, at any rate of the older ones. All these jungles have a population of animals, most of which have been ingeniously misnamed by the colonists. I have already referred to the "red deer." In India it is called "jungle sheep," which is equally absurd. "Jungle goat" would be more expressive, at any rate, though it is a true deer. The commonest large animal in the coffee districts is the sambar deer. This has been more madly still nicknamed the "elk," while the common leopard is known as the "cheetah." The elephant was already almost unknown in my day in the older coffee districts.

It was in a coffee district not very far from Kandy that I was a witness of a singular phenomenon, which I have once seen referred to in an English magazine. The night was still and calm, and my host and I were sitting in the verandah. On the opposite slope was a small extent of jungle. I was just thinking about bed, when the valley began to echo with the sound of an axe.

"Rather late for wood-cutting, isn't it?" I said.

"Oh, that's not wood-cutting," was the answer—"that's the *pezazi*" (devil).

I stared at my friend, but his face was absolutely serious. Meanwhile, the axe-strokes fell louder and louder. Presently, with a crash, the tree—apparently a good-sized one—fell.

[1] In my day tea was a novelty.

"Now I suppose you'll tell me that isn't wood-cutting?" I sneered.

"'Tisn't, all the same."

"But I heard the tree fall!"

"Yes, and in a minute it'll begin again and go on perhaps all night. I don't suppose there's an old planter in Ceylon that hasn't heard it. You go there to-morrow and examine every tree in the jungle, and you won't find the mark of an axe on one. There it is again."

For an hour or more I listened. At the end of the verandah the servants, usually so careful not to intrude on their master's privacy, were assembled, whispering. At last I went to bed, and fell asleep with the sounds produced by the mysterious lumberer ringing in my ears.

Need I say I was not convinced? Next morning, when my host had gone to muster his coolies, I slipped out and crossed the valley. The jungle, as I have said, was small, and, being crossed by a zigzag estate path, was easily examined. In half an hour I had fully satisfied myself that no tree had been felled there for years. On my way back I met my host.

"Been to look for felled trees, I suppose?"

"Who told you?"

"My good fellow, I did it myself the first time I heard it; and so have plenty of others."

This, then, is a mystery of the jungle. I leave the question to the reader's solution. If not the *pezazi*, what is it?

There is another horror of the Ceylon jungle—fortunately not inexplicable. I allude to the devil-bird. I believe there is a dispute among zoologists as to the exact species of the bird which goes by that

name. That there should be is natural enough, as will be seen presently. I am thankful to say that it has only once fallen to my lot to come in contact with it, and that under the circumstance I am proceeding to relate.

The district of Kurnegalla had never been very extensively opened up for coffee. I daresay now it may be a first-rate tea country. The few estates at its higher levels had, according to tradition, once been equal to producing their twelve hundredweight to the acre. These were golden times for Kurnegalla, and the planters were said to have spent much of their time consuming champagne in the little town so named. But those days had long since fled. Two to three hundredweight was more like the figure in my day, and the district was, indeed—

"Remote, unfriended, melancholy, slow."

Among other things, it was a fever district—a rare thing among Ceylon coffee plantations. Nevertheless, it so happened that the little knot of planters who looked after it were a rare, rollicking set of devil-may-care fellows, with whom the subalterns of our detachment were soon on the best of terms. Fifteen miles is not a long ride to dinner in the colonies, even though it had to be done back again in the small hours to enable one to appear at morning parade (6 A.M.). A few miles out one was thrown on the mercies of a minor road; fortunately, in this case, a swampy track through dense jungle, and good, soft going. At this time I was the fortunate possessor of a thoroughbred (Australian) horse that could trot five miles in twenty minutes, so the ride was a mere trifle to me.

One particularly dark and dirty evening I started out on one of these expeditions. Kurnegalla was, among other advantages, the only coffee district which was not considered quite safe, so I always carried a revolver. I reached my destination in heavy rain about dark, and was, as usual, hospitably received. For some reason or other my groom failed to turn up. In Ceylon, when a man rides thirty miles, his groom is expected to run the same distance. However, in this case it mattered little, as my host's men were ready to look after my nag. After a cheery dinner we settled down to a rubber, which was kept up very late, so that between one and two in the morning I mounted to ride home. As soon as my eyes got accustomed to the darkness I pushed on smartly. At the end of a brisk trot of some four or five miles I pulled up to a walk, partly to breathe my horse, but principally to let him pick his way over a particularly bad bit of road, which the buffaloes and cattle had poached into deep holes.

All at once there burst forth from the jungle to my left the most appalling succession of sounds I have ever heard. Perhaps they can be best compared to the stifled shrieks and moans of a woman under torture. Gradually they died away in a succession of choking sobs, as if the life of the victim was dying away with the sounds, leaving me rigid with horror, my pistol drawn in my right hand. My horse had stopped; very likely I had instinctively drawn rein. For some moments I listened, but nothing louder than the hum of insects and the drip of soaking vegetation reached my ear. While I listened I thought, and endeavoured to convince myself that I had not really been ear-witness to a crime. I knew the road well,

and knew also that there was not even a native hut for miles. Then the idea first came to me that I had heard the devil-bird, which I had heard spoken of before. With that idea I comforted myself and rode slowly on.

If I have not given the reader any idea of the horribleness of the thing, it is because I believe it impossible for mere description to do it. If anything further were needed to prove its effect on a heedless youngster of twenty, the proof lies in the fact that half an hour later I nearly shot my own groom from pure nervousness and—fear. For, noting that I was followed—stealthily, as I thought—by a native, I pulled up, and, covering him with the revolver, challenged him.

"Sir, sir, do not shoot!" cried the suspicious figure, and I at once recognised the voice of my groom. It appears he had lost his way, and stopped at some native huts till he should hear me ride past on my return. Many years have passed since then, but the memory of that occurrence is as fresh in my mind as ever.

One more mystery of the jungle—and one to which I have never been able to get the slightest explanation—and I have done with horrors.

Some months had elapsed, and I was no longer alone in the little bungalow on the hill, having taken into partnership another officer, who, however, did not belong to my own regiment. On the night I am about to speak of my chum was dining out, and I was alone. It may have been ten o'clock or later, and I was lying in a China long-chair reading.

Before I go further I must give a brief description of the bungalow itself, so that what follows may be

clear to the reader. The house was a peculiar one, consisting, as it did, of three distinct and detached buildings. The principal one consisted of our sitting-room, flanked right and left by two bedrooms. This sitting-room had double doors, both in front and behind, but the latter, never being used, were securely locked, and a table stood in front of and against them. About fifteen feet behind this building stood another, the rooms in which were appropriated as dining-room, spare bedroom, and bath-room. This building was always closed and locked after dinner had been cleared away, and it was so now. Parallel with it, and a few yards to its left, stood a third building, containing the kitchen, servants' quarters, &c. This was also closed at the time, the servants being all indoors. The night was fine and still.

As I lay reading my back was towards the disused folding-doors and the two little windows which flanked them. Suddenly, without any warning, the little room echoed with the sound of a violent blow, delivered on these doors. I did not trouble to move, but called in the usual Ceylon way, "Boy!"

"Sir!" came the reply, and I heard the kitchen door opened, and directly after my head servant entered the room.

"What's the meaning of this?" I asked angrily. "Do you think my room is the place for you fellows to play the fool in?"

"I don't understand, sir. All the servants are in the kitchen." (My servant spoke English perfectly, if not quite so idiomatically as I have written.)

"Then, what was that noise?"

"Yes, sir; I heard the noise. I thought it was master."

I was puzzled, but dismissed him. I do not think he could have reclosed the kitchen door a minute when the blow was repeated with tremendous violence. The first blow might conceivably have been delivered by a powerful human fist, but this sounded as if a rock had been hurled against the doors. Indeed, if such a blow had really been dealt the somewhat crazy woodwork, I feel sure it would not have stood it. As it was, there was not a mark on it, as I satisfied myself next day.

Directly the second noise occurred I sprang to my feet and ran through my bedroom to the back of the building. As I did so the kitchen door opened, and a group of servants with lights appeared at the top of the steps. Need I say we saw nothing, found nothing. It was a bright moonlight night and clear as day.

Angry and uncomfortable I returned to my room, leaving both doors of my bedroom open and directing the servants to leave theirs. My first step was to place my loaded revolver by my hand, and then I took up my book. Scarcely had I done so when the same thing happened again, only this time the noise was less loud than the second time. I am positive that no living thing could have disappeared from the little quadrangle between the buildings ere my servants and I appeared on the scene.

Again, nothing! This time I admit I was scared. I threw myself into my chair again, pistol in hand. Silence followed.

The sudden opening of the front door three or four minutes afterwards made me jump. It was my "stable companion."

"Hullo!" he said, "what's the matter with you? Here—drop that."

"You needn't be afraid. I have no idea of shooting myself. It was someone else I took that out for."

"What is it, then? You look as if you had seen a ghost."

"That I certainly haven't. But perhaps I've heard one;" and over a whisky-and-soda and a cheroot I told him the story, just as I have written it here. We sat up rather late, expecting to hear something more, but we did not. Nor was it repeated during my (not long) further sojourn at Kandy. For me it remains a mystery of the jungle.

With another jungle there are, for me, only pleasant reminiscences connected. Some two years after the time I have just mentioned I was stationed at Point-de-Galle. It certainly was a wretched place—hot and dull. The jungle nowhere approaches such an old settlement, but within a moderate ride was a fairly extensive piece — Kottowe Forest. This was a primæval tropical forest, or would have been, had not a good road run through it. In the forest itself stood a rest-house; for what reason it is hard to imagine, for there was absolutely no traffic on the road. It was a charming spot. Noble trees surrounded the little bungalow, and in front of it a little stream babbled over tiny falls under the orchids, calladiums, and ferns. Near the house this had been dammed to form the most delightful and idyllic of baths. The water was as clear as crystal, and populated by a peculiar perch-shaped little fish, striped with bands of gold and crimson. Here I would generally arrive towards dusk. At daybreak I would be aroused by the loud and guttural cries of the great black wandara monkeys, and, after a hasty breakfast, take my rifle and stroll into the forest.

This particular jungle contained little game; as, indeed, was natural from its situation. Among its woodland burghers, however, were a very curious family—a herd of dwarf elephants. I never molested them; and I may say that I grew to a certain extent familiar with them, so often did I watch them, for perhaps an hour at a time, from the cover of a tree-trunk well to leeward. The herd at the time numbered seven individuals, of all ages apparently, but not one among them reached the height of seven feet. I attribute the fact to in-breeding only. A great extent of open and cultivated country severed their home from any other jungles, and it is my belief that they or their forebears had been entirely separated from all intercourse with their kind for perhaps a century, or even more. The one calf which at the time accompanied the herd was a truly comical little object, and I greatly coveted its possession. If my theory was correct, it would probably never reach the height of six feet. The nature of their surroundings had also affected the habits of the herd. Although they were neighbours to miles of rice grounds, plantain patches, and so forth, they were essentially jungle elephants, and I never heard of their making a foray even upon the most accessible and unprotected crops. Yet their fear of man was less developed by far than that of the ordinary herd-elephant. Although it was only necessary for me to show myself to put them to flight, it never seemed to me that their retreat was quite the headlong rush of the elephants of the great forests of the east coasts.

Of these forests—and of other jungles in Continental India with which I have since become acquainted—I do not here intend to write, for two reasons.

The first is that on those subjects I have had a good deal—some may think too much—to say in other books. The second is that it was not my purpose when I began to speak of the great primæval forests, which may still be fairly classed as unexplored by man. My object has been to write of the jungle as it interweaves itself with our daily life in one of our principal tropical possessions.

CHAPTER II.

THE OLD PACK.

It is all very well to "go to the Shires," as Mr Sawyer did, or to cross the Irish Channel and enjoy the delights of gallops on equally green and less holding pastures in Meath, but after all we never lose, I think, the old keen sense of pleasure, which dates from our knickerbocker days, and which returns when we run down for a few days with the old pack "at home."

As we emerge from the little station into the street of the quaint old market town, we are reminded of the hounds at once by a broad grin under a finger-rapped hat brim, whose wearer occupies the box seat of a comfortable-looking waggonette. Is it not Bill M——, erstwhile the man who blooded us to fox, and who has now in his old age descended to the comfortable servitude of two maiden ladies? For in the provinces the huntsman by no means occupies the position he does in the crack counties; and we have known one who was not above ploughing on non-hunting days. But we can't stay, for the dog-cart waits. As we pass the local club we exchange a wave of the hand with the Rev. Nat B——, who, though staunch to his resolution, made the day he

first took orders, never to hunt again, is generally engaged in parochial work in the neighbourhood of the covert most likely to be drawn whenever the meet is in his parish. Talking to him is F. E——, the most sporting of solicitors, and the worthy secretary of the Old Hunt. Now we are out of the town, and the home welcome concerns ourselves alone.

Next morning comes the jog along the familiar lanes to the meet with "the governor," who, on his confidential cob, doesn't look as if he was verging on the scriptural limits of man's age. His broad ridge-and-furrow cords and stout-soled tops make our leathers and Peale's look rather dandified; but no matter, we have other things to think of. "The Forty Acres in roots this year?" "Yes; and held more birds than I ever saw there," is the answer. Why, oh why, were we at Hong-Kong, or Meerut, as the case may be, then? "Yes; that hill pasture never was any good, so I planted it up with larch in '9—. Rare covert it is now; Johnny B—— killed three woodcocks there on one day last season." Then we are off the old place, but remarks on ——'s farm, and how such and such a place has recently changed hands, fill up the time, till we are surprised to see how soon we have reached the meet.

The meet! The last we were at was perhaps at Dunshauglin, or Badby, or Thorpe Thrussels. This is rather a different thing. Counting ourselves, there are just six pinks, perhaps thirty horsemen all told, and two vehicles. But what a hearty welcome to contrast with the "How do?" we got there.

First it is the squire. 'Pon my word, he does not look a day older than when he first took the horn. Was that the year before or the year after we went

into trousers? Anyhow, it is over a quarter of a century ago. He is as monosyllabic as ever, but the grip he gives your hand makes your fingers tingle.[1] Close to him is Will, the kennel huntsman and whipper-in, who has been with the pack as long as the master, and is absolutely autocratic in the feeding-house, and very nearly so on the flags. Like his predecessor yesterday, he, too, is on the broad grin. Then there are a couple of the governor's cronies who remember us in long clothes, and half a dozen farmers, some of whom do the same, whilst the others played cricket with or against us in the holidays later on.

But the squire is not given to waste time. With a slight whistle he turns his hog-maned horse off the green (of course the meet is on a village green, and the spectators principally women, children, and geese), and jogs down the road. Not much more than a furlong on he turns to the right, and then a muddy, stony land lead us to the covert.

This is a leg-of-mutton-shaped patch of young larch, the trees being some years older at the broad end where the squire has just waved in the hounds with a "Eleu in, there." The other side of the high-road we have just left is a big woodland; but it is up-wind to-day, and master and man commence a duet of whip-crackings and cheering which is calculated to turn any fox from this point.

"Now then, youngster, as I suppose you mean to how us all how to do the trick, you'd better come with me," says the governor, and leads the way to ne side of the, so to say, point of the covert. Mean-hile, hounds have found, and are pushing their

[1] The squire (alas!) is gone. Only about a week before his death I saw m out hunting—but no longer as M.F.H.

quarry busily about the thick stuff. So you are not surprised, on hearing a cough, to look round and find the bulk of the field silently waiting behind you. Not the men these to spoil their own sport.

Just then a magnificent dog-fox goes away not two-score yards in front of you. All are silent until he has disappeared through the next fence, and then a cheery "tally-ho" bursts from nearly every one. But the pack requires no assistance, for they are close at his heels, and like a waterfall they pour out of covert, under, over, and through the fence. A slight swing, a hover, and they are away! Master and man come pounding along on opposite sides of the spinney, forrard-awaying at the top of their voices. But the pace seems to us rather too good for politeness, and we are off before they reach us, making the best of our way to the place in the first fence—a big hairy one—we picked a couple of minutes ago.

. . . . . .

Good as the pace was when they first left the covert, the mixed pack has kept it up for twenty good minutes, and the field is considerably reduced. We have been lucky enough to keep our place; to our left is a local doctor, riding, as doctors generally do, as if they could set their own bones. Will is about a field behind, but, as we know, he got all the worst of the start, and between him and us is a young horse-dealing farmer, on something that looks rather like a thoroughbred. A few more men are descending the slope we have just left behind, but they are riding to us rather than to hounds. This is the bottom. A complication of muddy, swampy stream, with rotten banks, ragged alders, half-broken rails, and a piece of chain to keep cattle

from walking up the bed, makes an obstacle which causes us to rejoice that we are on an Irish one. By giving him his own way we get over and tackle the "bank" the other side of the valley, perhaps four hundred feet high, and really nearly as steep as the proverbial "side of a house." Up and up we struggle, hounds getting away from us at each step. Fortunately the fences are full of gaps or else provided with handy gates, for who could jump at this angle? At last our sobbing steeds top the hill, but hounds are gone. The where is hardly doubtful, for a furlong on begins a wood, one of the many with which the country is dotted. They must be there, we argue, and spur our sobbing nags into a canter. As we progress they catch their wind by degrees.

Right! the old oaks shake with the melody with which the pack are driving their fox through the woodland. Let us hope they haven't changed. We are able to save our horses as they work their way along parallel with the ride we are on, and still we get to the far end first. "Whoa, fool, vot are ye champing the bit for?" to quote Mr Jorrocks. Yes; there he goes, and looks fresh enough, too. But it is a hunted fox for all that. We rein back a yard or two to get room to shove at the wattled stile at the end of the ride, and as we get over Will comes round the other side of the wood. "Away, away, away!"

For the next ten minutes or so the country is really delightful. There is a good deal of grass, and the plough rides light. The fences are easy, with gaps for those who like to go and look for them; and even when here and there we get a big

place, the odds are the gate in it is no higher than a sheep-hurdle, and unlocked to boot. The pace remains good; we have been running over forty minutes, when—what is this?

"This" is—Great Woods, one of the drawbacks to fox-hunting in the old country. Their extent is numbered by thousands of acres, and when once you get into them you may have to pound along for hours in hock-deep rides to keep with the pack. Neglect to do so, and you are sure to be slipped. Confound it! here we shall spend the rest of the day.

But what is that? Tally-ho, forrard! It is *ride* now, to see if the fast-sinking varmint will make his point. How the pack strive! He will! He won't! Who-whoop! and they roll him over under the very boundary fence. Who-whoop! Who-whoop!

Well, they can't say we haven't shown them the trick this time. But who is this who emerges from the lane on the left? The squire! and the governor! Presently Will comes up to us. "Please, captain, squire says would you like a brush to put with yours from the cut-'em-down countries?" And, having said, explodes.

Never mind; there is worse fun than a day with the Old Pack.

CHAPTER III.

BUCK-SHOOTING IN THE MAIRWARRA COUNTRY.

As the tourist is whirled—not too rapidly—across the great Indian peninsula in the train, the commonest object of wild life which he will see from the railway-carriage window is the buck. Here, there, and everywhere the herds may be seen, generally standing, for the train is an ordinary sight, and no longer causes alarm. By the term buck, the common Indian antelope, or black buck, is meant, but in the heading of my chapter I include the Indian gazelle, commonly known as the chikara or ravine deer. The latter is as common, or perhaps even commoner, than the former, and is even to be seen at times in the cantonment itself. Perhaps I should explain that a cantonment is the area on which a military station stands, with the native bazaar thereunto appertaining, and may be taken as equivalent to our term township.

The Indian antelope, or black buck, is truly a game-looking animal. As the name imports, the adult males, or rather the oldest of them, are a rich, glossy brown-black. The face is quaintly marked by double markings in white, and the spiral horns are long and sharp. It is useless giving any exact standard for what constitutes a really good

pair of horns, and they vary greatly according to the district in which the buck is shot. The neighbourhood of Ferozepore has long been noted for producing the longest horns. The younger bucks are brown in colour, the shade being lighter as the beast is younger, till at last the youngest bucks can only be distinguished from the does, which have no horns, by the presence of those appendages.

The Indian gazelle, or chikara, is a more humble-looking little beast, mouse-brown in colour, with a white belly. Both sexes have horns, which curve slightly backwards. The chikara is far less difficult to stalk than the black buck, but affords a very small mark. The vital parts are practically contained in a space not much bigger than this book, which, though it may seem a fair mark, is pretty hard to hit at a distance of one hundred and fifty yards, when the whole atmosphere is quivering with heat and "mirage," under the rays of an Indian summer sun.

The best season for buck-shooting is the hot weather. Grass and crops being equally absent, buck and chikara can be readily seen and approached —that is, within a couple of hundred yards, after which stalking is necessary. I am speaking now of English territory, for in the Native States all game is much less shy and more easily approached. Terrific as is the power of the Indian sun, I always spent one or two days every week in shooting, and never had cause to regret it; but, of course, proper precautions must be taken. A "sola"[1] hat of Brobdingnagian proportions, covering the shoulders as well as the head, blue-tinted spectacles, and a strip of

[1] "Sola" is a kind of pith impervious to the sun's rays.

flannel sewn inside the coat to cover the spine, are absolute essentials. Add to this the absolute avoidance of stimulants, except perhaps a little claret-and-soda with lunch, and the odds are the sportsman will not suffer from exposure to the sun.

There are various ways of stalking buck, but the most usual is the one I am about to describe, and that is with a bullock-cart. The buck are used to seeing these carts about with the natives, and as a rule will allow them to approach, if intelligently driven in a spiral, within a hundred and fifty yards —that is, if they have not been too much shot at. The sportsman should be walking at the far side of the cart, and when he judges the buck will not stand a nearer approach, he must kneel quietly down behind a tree or bush, while the unwieldy vehicle goes creaking and clattering on. It is just possible that if the cart is carefully and intelligently worked round the herd they may approach the sportsman nearer, but as a rule the shot has to be taken at about the range I have named, and frequently unsuccessfully. It is hardly necessary to say that following it up with running shots is absolutely useless, though it is often done. The only result is a considerable extent of country disturbed for nothing.

The weapon to be used for buck-shooting is of course an Express rifle, preferably ·400 bore, but anything between ·300 and ·500 will do.[1] The finest antelope-shot I ever knew, who was my companion on the day I am going to endeavour to give an account of, never used any other weapon but a mili-

[1] The modern high-velocity rifle is very dangerous on Indian plains. I find no weapon better for such sport as I am describing than Westley-Richards' "Sherwood" Rifle, used with the "L.T." patent bullet.

tary Martini-Henry ·577—·450 with a solid bullet; and when I recount that I have known him to return from a single day's shooting out of a *tonga* (native dog-cart), with which he would certainly not get any chance under one hundred and fifty yards, with three buck (antelope and gazelle) and a great bustard, my sporting readers will understand what a very deadly enemy the buck lost when fever carried him off. Not only is the performance a proof of good shooting, but even more so of ability to judge distance,—a very difficult matter on the Indian plains. Yet, when the very high trajectory of these rifles and the smallness of the mark are considered, it is obvious that any failure to estimate the distance within a very few yards would ensure a miss.

To come to our day, however. It was about the very hottest of the hot weather, when H——, above referred to, and I agreed to make an expedition in quest of buck to a district, concerning which his *shikari* had made a good report, some fifteen miles away. There is little hardship at rising at four in the morning in such weather, for it is only at that hour that the heat is at all endurable, so I was quite ready when H—— rattled up in a hired tonga. My quota of ice, soda-water, and lunch was put in, and we were off. Through the silent rows of bungalows we rattled, and then through the equally silent bazaar, and for the next hour and more nodded and dozed on our uncomfortable seats, while the conveyance followed one of the splendid roads with which British India is so plentifully provided. At last a succession of bumps and jolts told us we had entered upon a country track, and this we fol-

lowed till the sun was reddening the eastern sky. It was broad day when we reached our destination —a native village. Here the sleepy herdsmen were just beginning to unpen and drive out their herds of curious-looking goats and sheep, exactly in the same way that their forefathers did one—and probably two—thousand years ago. These villages still present the same roughly defensive aspect, clustering as they do round some central keep that their architects learned when a succession of northern conquerors swept over the land.

H——'s *shikari* came to meet us, and told us he had the two bullock-carts waiting a little way from the village, at the edge of the plain where we were to shoot. We shouldered our rifles and set off. Round the village well were clustered picturesque groups of girls and women, chattering and drawing water, while perched on the walls and trees were flocks of gorgeous peafowl—sacred, of course. A short walk brought us to the carts, most primitive structures, with bodies shaped to go over the wheels, and filled for the occasion with a little grass for us to sit on. Wishing one another good luck we parted company.

My cart bumped and rattled along for some time, till at last my servant, who was sitting in front with the driver, leant back and told me he could see two chikara. I told him to drive towards them, and when a couple of hundred yards off, I slipped off the cart and walked on the far side of it. They were evidently a bit shy and twice moved off too soon. At last I told the driver to try and move them towards me, and dropped down among the thorn bushes. These were so low I had to lie flat

so as not to be seen, and in this position I could see nothing, while the sun, which soon gets strength in May, was fairly roasting me. At last, when I was just beginning to think my cart man had made a mess of the thing, I saw two pair of horns above the thorns within a hundred yards. A few minutes after an opening in the bushes showed me a shoulder. As to get up would mean to move them, I didn't see how I should get a better chance; so I fired, and to my delight heard the bullet tell. Jumping to my feet, I saw one gazelle bounding off while the other lay kicking. Unfortunately, it was a doe, who had paid the penalty of bearing horns. She was soon bundled into the cart, and we proceeded. The next thing we saw was a splendid black buck attended by a couple of does. Unfortunately, they were terribly wild, galloping off before we had got within a quarter of a mile of them. However, he was worth bagging, so I persevered. The second attempt was still more disastrous, for they galloped clean out of sight.

Proceeding across the dusty plain, I shortly afterwards perceived the other bullock-cart and made towards it. H—— had a nice buck chikara, and explained the mystery of the black buck by telling me he had had a long shot and missed it. No wonder it was so wild. After a drink of cold tea we once more parted company. Half an hour afterwards I missed a young antelope buck (not black), and then made towards a clump of trees we had fixed on for lunch. Here H—— joined me a little later, he also not having increased his bag.

My experience points to the fact that sport at a temperature of a hundred degrees in the shade or thereabout does not conduce to appetite. Though

we were not hungry, the iced claret-and-soda and subsequent cheroot were pleasant enough, as was the shade of the wild fig-trees we had halted under. Unfortunately, one of H——'s bullocks was unfit to proceed, so for the rest of the day we had to work together. We did not see anything for some time, the herdsmen having driven their flocks over the adjacent ground. Presently, however, we were somewhat surprised to hear a shot, and looking back we saw a smart bullock-carriage moving parallel with us. In a few minutes it halted again, and a white-clad figure jumping out ran forward, pointing a gun at something we could not see. However, he did not get a shot, and presently the animal, whatever it was, appeared, and made for a heap of rocks not far from us. Neither of us could make out what it was, but both agreed that if a wild animal, it was one with which we were unacquainted. Presently the sportsman came up to us, and turned out to be a native Mohammedan gentleman. He informed us that he was in pursuit of a mad dog, which had bitten a number of cattle, and begged our help. Accordingly we assisted him in beating out the rocks, but saw no more of the dog. He then asked us to come to his house, after which he would show us where to find buck, and insisted on our occupying his bullock-carriage whilst he walked beside us.

Before long we arrived at a sort of square fort profusely loopholed. A gate between two flanking towers was unbarred and we drove in. Here we found the usual combination of display and dirt so common among natives, being ushered into a dirty room with some old furniture in it. As soon as we decently could we suggested a fresh start, and the

three of us started in a fresh bullock-cart, attended by a rabble of dirty servants—all armed, of course. I told H—— that we were not likely to do much good like this, and he agreed. Presently our friend bowled over a hare, which, however, went on again. I had lost sight of her, when one of the attendants uttered a yell, and tore off in order to cut the throat of the beast, which he had seen fall. It is, of course, unlawful for the Mussulman to eat meat which has not been so treated. The animal must be alive, but this is always *supposed to be the case*. The invocation of the name of God is never omitted.

As I had imagined, the buck seemed unwilling to allow themselves to be approached by such a procession, and, indeed, there were not many about. Late in the afternoon we came on a small herd, which seemed a little less shy. The master buck was not a black one, but a very fair one, approaching a dark shade of brown. They would not let us get within a couple of hundred yards, but at length H—— dropped down behind a clump of camel-thorns, while we circled round them. With some little trouble we got them to move in the required direction, but then they would not stand. As they were walking along I saw a puff of smoke, and as the accompanying report reached my ear the big buck collapsed, while the others made off with mighty bounds. The natives were considerably astonished at H——'s performance, the distance being about a hundred and seventy yards.

This was the last chance we had, as our homeward way lay over the plain we had worked in the morning.

The tonga ponies were wretchedly bad, and at

one time I thought they would never get us, and their additional load of a buck and two chikara, through the heavy sand which lay between us and the high-road. When we got home it was long after dinner-time, but these are the minor annoyances that the sportsman has to put up with. Indeed, the next time we went out we fared much worse, for no sooner had we got to our shooting-ground than the most terrific dust-storm I have ever seen came on. For some hours we wandered on, having utterly lost our way among the blinding sand, and when we did get home we were as black as the buck we had not seen.

CHAPTER IV.

THE BEST RUN I EVER SAW.

MANY hunting men would find it difficult, I do not doubt, to say definitely which was the best day of their lives. Indeed there are many things wanted to make up a good run, and even more to make it an enjoyable one. In the first place, there must be a burning scent and the hounds must run *fast*. Then you must have a good straight-necked fox, who must get well away without getting headed. Thirdly, your mount, "the fiddle to which you are the bow," must not only be as good as a horse can be, but he must be in good condition and fit to run for a man's life. Fourthly, your own nerve must be in rare order. There must have been none of those late hours and smoking-room symposia which make many a man inclined to "see what's the other side" of his fences. The man's condition must be equal to his horse's, or, when the former begins to fail, the latter can give him no help. The country must be favourable also, and nearly, if not quite, all grass. The fences, while big enough to weed out the *profanum vulgus*, must be neither unjumpable nor wired. Lastly, while no "real good thing" ever had many "in it," there must be a few friends with you

throughout to help you talk of "*the* run" for the rest of your life. Now let me turn to my old diaries and see if I can find you a run which answers all the above requirements. Ah! here we are.

No, I'm not going to tell you the name of the pack. As in my time I have hunted with more than ninety packs, it will, I think, be a little difficult for any of my friends to identify it without my assistance. From the Cottesmore to the Coniston, from the Meath to the ——; but it's hard to say which is the most scratch of the many Irish scratch packs: you may take your choice.

It was in April, late for hunting, but March had opened with a fortnight's frost, and the season was backward. The day was fine and pleasant, with just a touch of sharpness in the air to help us to forget that the next meet advertised ended with those ominous words, "to finish the season."

The meet was at —— Bridge, an old stone structure spanning a boggy brook which flowed through a narrow valley. Many of the field had assembled thereon when the hounds arrived, so the Master, who hunted the hounds himself, stopped on the bridge. It was only just eleven o'clock. Presently an old hound got over the wall and commenced feathering up a boggy bit leading towards a small covert of gorse and rushes, the ground between which and the bridge was unrideable bog.

"Stop him," cried the Master; "get off and stop him."

A whip jumped off and went into the field. Two or three more hounds took this as a signal to join the first.

"Put 'em on to me," cried the Master, "or they'll be away."

He rode across the bridge and turned into a field. Seeing the dismounted whip couldn't stop the wanderers, he then rode down to the brook and threw the rest of the pack into the covert. Scarcely had he done so when a hound opened. The field hastened to follow the Master, for the ground was too boggy on the covert side of the brook.

Just then a hare broke away from the top of the covert, and went towards the right. Directly after, the leading hounds emerged on the very spot.

"'Ware hare! 'Ware hare!" cried some of the field.

"Do be quiet," shouted the Master.

Sure enough, when the hounds got a little way up the field they swung to the left.

"Forrard, forrard!" shrieked the Master, adding, "I *knew* it was a fox."

It was now our turn to get "forrard." A couple of trappy fences and a covert without rides thinned the field considerably, and at last some three or four of us only came down to the brook. It is boggy enough here, but we get over with a flounder, just as two more do so lower down.

We breast the slight rise which obstructs our view, and there, at the far end of the field, are the tail hounds striving hard to join the body of the pack.

It is *ride*, now. Already Bob ——, the gentleman rider,[1] has shot to the front on a thoroughbred. Presently we see the pack, close enough to be covered with the proverbial sheet, rising a slope. They are

[1] Now a Master of Hounds.

still a good bit in front. My old brown horse, the Leprechaun, has a season's condition and old corn to fall back on, but I am not going to press him. Steadily, steadily he gallops on, throwing his fences behind him almost without an effort. On, on, on! Grass fields, mostly big, and fences alone mark our course, while still, well in front of us all, the pack are fleeting along almost mute.

By Jove! how they do run! Not a hover, let alone a check, has lessened their speed since they left the brookside. Now I am on a piece of slightly higher ground, and have the whole panorama before me. Close to the hounds is Bob ——, with my friend T—— B —— in close attendance. A field behind is the Master, his four-hundred-guinea hunter fencing as if the sixteen stone odd on his back was a fleabite. I am still a field behind him; behind to my right is a stranger, a Lifeguardsman,[1] who generally hunts with a neighbouring pack. Further back still I see one other sportsman, but where are the field? Echo answers, where?

I lean forward and pat the old horse's neck. "Steady, old man, this can't last. They *must* come back to you. They've been running now for five-and-twenty minutes."

That was a trappy place! A cart-road with broad ruts, eight or nine inches deep, on the landing side of the fence; but the old horse generally has a leg to spare, and we are speeding on again.

The hounds are heading now for —— Great Woods, which are many acres in extent, and quite fill yonder punchbowl-shaped hollow. It is about half a mile across at the widest part. There are earths in those

[1] Now a Master of Hounds.

woods, and in April, out of consideration for the "teeming mothers of the vulpine race," there can be no earth-stopping. Here, then, our gallop must end.

No; for see, the hounds keep away from the wood.

The fox has run parallel with its upper edge, and taken a semicircular course through the great grass fields that surround it. He was too hot to enter the woodlands, so circled round them, looking and longing no doubt, and then held on again. Once more it is "forrard, forrard," but nobody says so. Hounds are nearly running away from us as it is.

We learnt afterwards that the main body of the field, who had been thrown out at the boggy brook and thus left behind at the outset, had considered these woods the fox's most likely point, and had made straight for them. Scarcely had they got in sight of them, coming by the valley below, when they saw the hounds with their few followers swing round the top and disappear again. The pace we were going at may be judged from the fact that when they reached the top, having, as may be imagined, lost no time in doing so, hounds and horsemen had completely disappeared again.

The woods then are left behind. Now we cross the only bit of plough I saw during the run. Surely the others are coming back to me now? Yes, I am in that field before the Master is out of it. A few minutes more and we are neck and neck.

"I wish I rode eleven stone," he shouts, as I top the next fence in front of him. This lands me into a long piece of poor land, studded with gorse bushes and slightly downhill. The other two are close in front

now, and we have been running nearly three-quarters of an hour. We must kill soon. The only wonder to me is how even such a gallant wild fox should have stood up before hounds so long.

The two leaders are pulling up and jumping off. Killed! is my first thought; but no, there go the pack as hard as ever. I gallop down to them, and soon see the cause of their getting off. The fence before them is a stone-faced bank with a few loose-looking sods on top. Before it runs a black-looking drain of some width, and for some distance the other side the ground is obviously boggy.

My right foot is out of the stirrup to dismount, when it suddenly occurs to me, why shouldn't I trust the old horse? No cleverer hunter ever was foaled in Ireland; it is soft falling at the worst, and if I do it I shall be alone with the hounds.

So thinking, I cram him manfully at it. Lightly he changes his legs on the top of the fence, and, clever as a cat, drops into the far field clear of the worst of the bog. Truth to tell, he does flounder a bit on landing, for forty-five minutes will tell on the best of condition, but I pull him together and skirt the steep hill before me. The other three, who have safely led over, are in hot pursuit.

A minute or two more and we come to a grassy lane closed by a hog-backed stile. It is small enough, but the old horse rattles it all round. The exit from the lane consists of another stile a foot higher than the former one.

"Rouse him up, Snaffle," shouts T—— B——, who is close behind. For the first time that day the old horse feels the spur, and he bounds over the obstacle with nearly a foot to spare. A few yards on is a high-

road. We emerge on it to find ourselves right among the hounds, who have checked at last. I pull out my watch; they have been running exactly fifty-two minutes.

The Master has his horn out directly, but his first forward cast across the road is fruitless. No wonder, for there is a small brook, by the side of which stands a fly-fisher, trying to look unconscious at the evil he has done.

Let us draw a veil over the Master's feelings—and language. No harm was meant, and after all men have a right to fish as well as hunt—perhaps more in April. The mischief was done, the fox was headed, and the run was practically over.

To be sure, the now necessary back-cast hit off the line, but the scent was cold. There was no more galloping; cantering, and sometimes even trotting, kept us with the hounds for the next twenty minutes, while they patiently worked out the line. At the end of that time they marked him into a hole, which looked like a rabbit-burrow, in a gorsy hillside. Who-whoop!

We all jumped off, though our horses had now pretty well recovered their wind. The Master looked covetously at the earth, but there is (or should be) no digging in April. We all agreed that it was a thousand pities hounds should loose their well-earned blood, but then again it was as well so gallant a fox should live

"To run again another day,"

and perchance to "teach the young idea how to" run also. Personally, I greatly doubt a fox being able to survive so terrific a burst. The run was in every way satisfactory. It was due to the Master's know-

ledge of and confidence in his hounds at the outset. It combined all the requirements I have laid down as necessary to a good run. The Master of course must regret the absence of blood, but the season (his last, by the way) was all but over, and hounds had had blood enough.

The Lifeguardsman, after congratulating the Master on so good a run, started for his home, now many miles away; we five also mounted and moved off. Before we had jogged a mile we met the field, who of course at once commenced to depreciate the run, which, nevertheless, is fixed in my memory as "the best I ever saw."

CHAPTER V.

BLUE-BULL SHOOTING.

The worst of the Indian summer was over; the rains had cooled the air a little, and brought back the green to the trees and dusty plains. Personally I would rather have had the dry heat continue, even with a high thermometer, the damp heat being more trying and far less healthy. Cholera rarely makes its appearance till after the rains. For the rest, life was as dull at ——pore as it surely can only be in the Indian plains in the hot weather. Of the score and a half of brother officers whose names appeared in the Army List, half a dozen were in England, and of the rest half were up in the hills, dancing and flirting at Simla or Mussoorie, or shooting in Cashmere or even Thibet. Consequently those left in the mess, perhaps eight or nine without the married men, got rather sick of each other's company, and looked eagerly forward to the Sundays and Thursdays, which brought some change by enabling them to get away from their station for the day. Especially did the sporting contingent, not just then very strongly represented in the regiment, look forward to the day of rest and to the "soldier's holiday."

I had worked all the neighbouring jungles and plains that I knew of, and was just wondering how I could manage to get four or five days' leave to open a campaign against a "very large tiger" (they always are "very large" till they are shot), which had been reported to me at a place on the railway about a hundred miles away, when a remark of our quartermaster's put an idea into my head.

"Ever been to Bir?" he asked, and on my replying in the negative he proceeded to describe it as a sort of earthly paradise, and yet only five miles distant from the barracks. This was good enough for me if there was only something to be shot, so I sent my *shikari* off to ascertain. In a day or two he returned and reported plenty of nilghai in the Forest Reserve, near the bungalow.

Nilghai are not considered very high-class game in India as a rule, but they very frequently provide uncommonly good sport in British territory. In the Native States they are ridiculously tame, and, moreover, the shooting them is very likely to lead to serious trouble with the villagers. In case they may not be familiar to some of my readers, I propose to give some account of them.

The nylghau is the largest of Asiatic antelopes, being only approached in size by the rare oryx, which frequents the Arabian desert. In fact it is the largest of all living antelopes, except the monstrous eland of Southern Africa, from which it differs greatly in the fact that its horns, unlike those of the eland, are very short, never exceeding nine inches.

In general appearance they resemble the cattle of the Channel Islands very much, and it is small wonder that the Hindoo natives of India should be

deceived by this and by their very cowlike long tails, including them in the reverent protection they afford to the sacred cow.

In colour the bulls are of a blue-grey, whence their Hindustanee name, *nylghau*, blue bull. The cows are of a rich chestnut brown, and both sexes have curious white marks about the legs and fetlocks. The bulls have a long fringe of hair hanging from the under side of the neck, and this part was formerly much sought for by natives to cover shields, the throat ornament forming the boss in the centre. They are not, as will be seen hereafter, so strictly nocturnal in their habits as some of the deer tribe. They frequent rocky hills covered with thorny jungle, and, in spite of their awkward and cowlike appearance, possess considerable activity and speed, so much so that even the sure-footed Arab horse finds it difficult to follow their headlong gallop, and it is only the oldest and heaviest bulls that have ever been fairly ridden down and killed with the spear. The horns, though short and pointed, like those of a bull, are put on like those of an antelope, meeting slightly towards the tips. Any one who has once seen the head of a blue bull will readily understand the remark of a well-known sportsman, who, meeting one for the first time face to face on a lonely track in the dusk of evening, incontinently took it for Old Nick *in propria persona*. The cows have no horns.

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Connected in my mind with the blue bull is one of those memories of past misery which, acute as it was at the time, is only recalled now to be laughed at. The story dates from the days of my earliest "grif-

finage," when I was willing to take the word of a worthless *haremzadeh* (scamp), self-dubbed *shikari,* as to the presence of game in any place, and also as to the best way to get at it.

Not to make my story too long, I had been in India about six weeks when the bazaar loafer in question persuaded myself and P——, another greenhorn, of the presence of large quantities of game in a district some fifty miles off.

Our troubles began early. Arrived at the end of our railway journey, no coolies were forthcoming, and a couple of valuable hours were thus lost. Towards dark we were persuaded by the cause of all our woes to disregard the local knowledge of the men we had with difficulty enlisted as to the route we should follow. The result of this was that, when the path we were following came to an abrupt end at the top of a rocky pass, we had to camp there, waterless, and this in an Indian May! Lest I should be misunderstood, I hasten to add that we had plenty of soda-water, but we had to leave camp at 5 A.M. without tea and unrefreshed by a wash.

The information as to game turned out to be on a par with that as to our route. Except a couple of gazelle we saw nothing for hours. At last I got a long shot at a nylghau and missed.

The cup of our misery was, however, not yet full. Nine o'clock came; then ten; the sun was high and the heat intense. But our horses never arrived. We had ordered them to skirt the rocky range we had walked across and join us at a certain village.

At last we started off, fasting and without any

supply of drink, to tramp fifteen miles across a roadless plain of deep sand intersected by countless nullahs. The memory of that walk is still to me as a hideous nightmare. After several miles of plodding through the hot sand, with parched throats and aching heads, we arrived at a well. Regardless of the obvious dangers of such water, we drank freely and sluiced our heads and shoulders; but for this I doubt if we should ever have reached, as we did, a large native town some miles further on. Here we obtained a native vehicle, which conveyed us to a dawk-bungalow some eight miles off. At last we were able to drink and sleep, for eating was out of the question. We rested till towards evening, when, having had some food, we started for home—still nearly a score of miles away—in a pair-horse conveyance we had hired.

Fate had hitherto done her worst by us, but apparently she now relented. About five miles from home we had to ascend a steepish pass, and got out to stretch our legs. Seeing a large number of partridges about, we got our guns and commenced shooting as we walked.

Presently I shot one, which towered, and topping a low hillock fifty yards from the road fell among some jungle beyond. The *shikari* went to fetch it, but to my surprise on gaining the crest of the hillock he dropped down and crept stealthily back to us.

"*Sahib, sahib, byle hai*" (sir, sir, there are cattle—*i.e.*, nylghai—there).

My plan of attack was soon made. The wind blew from our right, so I ordered the *shikari* and P——'s gun-bearer to go to that end of the jungle as soon as we had placed ourselves quietly at the

other. As we went I slipped a ball cartridge into each barrel of my gun, preferring that weapon to the single ·450 in the carriage.

A couple of minutes after we had taken post a herd of five nilghai broke from the covert, and passed us at a distance of some seventy yards, going at a lumbering trot.

Picking out the biggest one, I fired, and heard the spherical bullet tell loudly. Blood showed at once, but a little high and far back. My second barrel missed, as did P——'s only shot, and the herd disappeared round a corner of the rocky hill. Reloading, I started to follow them up, but almost at once our driver in the road below shouted: "He's down! He's down!" I hurried on to give the *coup-de-grâce*, but it was unnecessary, for twenty yards further on lay my first blue bull, stone-dead. The next job was to get him down to the road, nearly a hundred feet below. After gralloching him, I cut off the head, which with some nine inches of neck was as much as ever P—— and I could carry down between us. With the assistance of some passing natives the *shikari* rolled the carcase down the steep hill, and with great difficulty we managed to raise it sufficiently to secure it to the hind axle and springs. These proceedings took us a good deal more than an hour, and it was nearly nine o'clock before we reached our station.

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Nylghai have one great advantage over every kind of Indian deer and antelope with which I am acquainted, in that their meat is excellent eating. Indeed, I know very few things much better than a well-corned round of blue-bull beef. Sambar is

practically uneatable, and spotted deer, antelope, and gazelle are dry and tasteless. To my mind the most toothsome of all Indian animals is the porcupine. But I am digressing from my subject.

Having got leave without difficulty, I and a non-shooting companion started in a hired tonga or Indian dog-cart, about half-past five the evening before. This left us about an hour's daylight, which ought to have been ample, but unfortunately neither we nor the driver knew the road; and going on my general knowledge of the whereabouts when his gave out entirely, we wandered on through cotton-fields and across dried-up torrent-beds until long after dark. However, all's well that ends well, and at last we reached the bottom of a steep avenue which wound up a hillside, at the top of which we could see the white bungalow. Up and up the road wound, and as the precipitous bank was entirely unprotected, it may be imagined that we lost no time in jumping out when the tonga ponies, by commencing to jib, gave us a hint that they would prefer a lighter load to drag up. A few paces more brought us to the house which, except in its situation, did not differ greatly from most dawk-bungalows. This particular house of call, however, not being near a high-road, was not primarily intended for travellers' accommodation, but for the use of those officers of the Irrigation and Forest Services whose duties called them to the spot.

It was dinner-time when we arrived, and before very long we were seated at table in the verandah, enjoying the lovely scene which lay before our eyes. To the right and close to the bungalow itself lay the *bund* or embankment of the tank, a gigantic wall

of masonry some two hundred yards long, and perhaps seventy feet high, backed by the dark foliage of a mango tope. The tank or lake which was formed by this wall was extended at our feet, and ran up as far as we could see to our left, where it wound out of sight, thus giving the impression of a much larger sheet of water than I afterwards discovered it to be, for it really ended just beyond the corner. The clear rays of the moon showed up the water and the steep hills that enclosed it, but as they did not expose the arid and sterile nature of those hills, the *tout ensemble* suggested one of the minor lakes of England.

I had to be up early next morning, so did not devote too much of the evening to the view. We made for our beds, but not to sleep much, for some wandering member of the local *fauna*, a hyæna I think, disturbed us twice by entering one of the bedrooms before morning.

After despatching my morning tea, I handed my 12-bore rifles to my *shikari* and a villager he had brought with him, and started. First of all we crossed the embankment, and, following a little bay of the lake just opposite the bungalow, we plunged into the hills. Half an hour's walk took us into the Forest Reserve, a jungle consisting principally of thorny bushes. Here the *shikari* had some more men waiting. A hurried consultation took place, resulting in a further move across the broad vale we were in.

At last the man who had accompanied us pointed to a swell of the ground just in front, and the *shikari* whispered that the herd was just beyond that. I crept silently to the edge and peered over. Yes,

there they were, feeding, dispersed among the bushes some seventy yards away. Quietly I took my second rifle from the *shikari*, cocked it, and laid it beside me. About in the centre of the herd were two bulls, conspicuous by their light colour. I aimed behind the shoulder of the nearer one, and, seeing him fall to the shot, I dropped the other with my left barrel. Then I caught up my second rifle.

"Shoot, sahib, shoot," cried the *shikari*, as a large nylghau crossed an opening in some bushes nearly a hundred yards off. I need hardly say that by this time the herd were in confused flight, not knowing whence the danger threatened.

"But it's not a bull," I answered, for I could see no horns.

"*Atcha, sahib, byle*" (yes, sir, it is a bull).

This statement, and the large size of the beast, convinced me I was mistaken; so I fired, and though I struck it, it continued to move off. The left barrel dropped it, but it got up and moved slowly on. Reloading as I went, I ran swiftly after it. As I reached the top of a low hillock, I saw it descending just in front of me. Aiming over the root of the tail, I sent it rolling to the bottom of the slope, and following it up I found—as I had now realised—a remarkably large, fine cow. She made an abortive effort to charge me, but I soon put her out of her misery, and returned to look after the bulls. To my intense disgust I could find neither, and my assistants seemed not to have taken the least trouble to ascertain what had become of them.

I was greatly provoked, as I have the strongest objection both to killing the female of any harmless game, and to wounding any animal and failing to

bring it to hand. Every circumstance combined to increase my annoyance on this occasion. The cow when cut up proved to be in an interesting condition, and contained two fully-developed calves. Furthermore, my *shikari* reported that he had seen a bull with a broken shoulder in an adjoining jungle the day after. A very small amount of common-sense on the man's part at the time would have enabled me to follow it up successfully.

I may here remark that I beat this same jungle again a fortnight later, and found only cows and calves, into shooting at which I was not again misled. This unfortunately only confirmed my belief that neither bull could have survived his wound.

There being some *chamars* (members of the leather-dressing caste) among the men, I set them to work to skin and cut up the cow, which was far too heavy to be moved. Nobody having any idea where the wounded bulls had got to, I could only order the men to beat out all the neighbouring jungles, a proceeding which resulted in my seeing nothing but two hyænas.

About two o'clock I gave it up in disgust, and returned to the place, whence, the skinners having completed their work, a string of coolies was just starting off with the meat. Every rock and hill-top all round was black with vultures and kites waiting for their turn. I returned to the bungalow for food and rest.

In the evening I walked all round the tank without seeing any game, and as I was returning I heard a curious whistling and splashing, for which I had some difficulty in accounting. Presently I perceived a number of otters making the circuit of the tank.

As I wanted a skin for my collection, I crouched down behind a bush and waited. On they came till I could count them. There were no less than twelve. As they got near me one of them raised himself half out of the water, as if to reconnoitre, and I shot him.

Silence followed the echoing report, but in a few minutes I could hear the others whistling and calling far up the tank.

After dinner we started for home in the most brilliant moonlight, which made the road, or rather track, as clear as daylight would have done. The driver had previously made inquiries about his route, so we had no difficulty in finding our way this time. An hour later we were at home.

One morning my *shikari* returned from an expedition in search of game. I may remark that most of these expeditions in search of game are apocryphal, the *shikari* merely spending two or three days in the bosom of his family, and trusting to bazaar rumours for news of game.

"Well," I said, "where have you been?"

"Danta jungles, sahib."

"What *khubber* (intelligence) have you brought?"

"*Bot nilghai hai, sahib, ek burra byle hai.*" (There are many nylghai there, sahib, there is one big bull.)

Accordingly, having discussed my early tea, I mounted my horse and cantered off to the rendezvous, which was only some four miles away. Here I found the *shikari* and his beaters, some of whom had seen the bull, accompanied by four cows, leaving the jungle at daylight. They had entered a jungle-covered valley in the mountain, from which they had not been seen to emerge. No doubt they would lie up there for the day.

"The beaters must stop here," I said; "you [to the man who had seen the herd] and the *shikari* come with me."

About a couple of hundred yards from the valley I stopped. This was the nature of the ground. From the main hill above a spur ran out, forming a small valley on each side. The one to my left was full of tamarisk and camel-thorns. This was the one where the herd was said to be. The other was more open, with a lot of loose rocks lying about. The wind was pretty well on my left shoulder as I faced the hill.

My plans were soon made. It was obvious if I went up the right-hand valley and crawled out along the spur I should get a shot. If the antelopes—for huge and unwieldly as the nylghai is, he is a true antelope—were lying down, as was probably the case, a whistle from me would soon bring them to their feet.

I left the two natives with the strictest injunctions to remain where they were, and not to make too much noise, and taking my 12-bore rifle from the *shikari* I started off on my stalk. Before approaching the hill I walked off half a mile to my right, and then returning, completely concealed by the spur, I approached the rocky gorge.

My "Field" boots were soled with jute, making my footsteps inaudible, but the stalk was still one of some difficulty. The chaotic masses of loose stones and rocks, the fall of any one of which would have betrayed me, required great caution to surmount. Added to which the hill was very steep, and I had only one hand to aid me, my rifle being unprovided with a sling. The sun, too, had now gained its full strength, and as I was quite shut off from the breeze,

and carrying a heavy rifle, it is small wonder the perspiration was pouring off me long before I reached the top. At last I did so, however, and sat down behind the last crest to make my final preparations and get my wind.

In a few minutes I pushed my rifle on to the slab rocks which formed a spur and crawled after it myself. Another minute and I was peering into the upper part of the glen. Nothing to be seen. I crawled farther with the same result. At last I got right out on the point of the rock nearest the plain. Still nothing visible, but raising my eyes I saw the *shikari* gesticulating violently. Evidently he had disobeyed my instructions and moved the herd. I stood up now and whistled, but with no result. So I climbed down and walked to the valley where the beasts had been. I had no doubt whatever in my mind as to the cause of their absence. Curiosity or sheer "cussedness" had caused the *shikari* to shift his position, and by so doing had given them his wind. Once on their legs it is possible they may have looked over into the next gorge and seen my innocent self toiling up. Anyhow they left the hills and entered the big jungle.

My first proceeding was to distribute well-earned abuse between the two "haughty Rajpoots" who had spoilt my stalk. I then proceeded to inquire as to the route the herd had taken. This is all I could ascertain, as of course no one knew exactly where they had gone to.

The first two beats failed to move them, but in the third one, or rather after it, some wood-cutters reported they had seen the herd making off towards the west. I followed them up, crossing the high-road

which connects Mhow with Ajmere. Here all trace seemed to be lost, and some of the men who had been sent on came back and said they could see nothing of them. As it was obvious that they must be somewhere I did not give it up, but sent my men to get some water, which they wanted badly; while I sat down in the shade of a great banyan or wild-fig tree and ate my breakfast. After an hour's rest we started again. A long belt of jungle ran along the base of a steep mountain. For some time we saw nothing. At last a hyæna broke back. I was tired of not shooting, so took a galloping shot at about a hundred yards and missed. I regretted afterwards that I had done so.

The jungle became thicker, and the ground was very broken by ravines. The beaters were very tired and would not keep line. I was moving on in front of them rather on the outskirts of the belt. At the end of about an hour I saw the coolie highest up the hill signalling. I halted the line, and ordered the *shikari* to make them beat it straight out. Meanwhile I hurried on. Before I had got far I distinctly heard the sound of galloping hoofs. I listened, but hearing nothing more thought I must have been deceived, and pressed on. On reaching the top of a small hillock I got a view all round. Alas! some hundreds of yards behind, right out on the plain, I saw the herd galloping away, the rear being brought up by the big bull. This was the first time I had seen them. My horse was far away, and had he not been the chase was hopeless. They had got a tremendous start, and the ground was a mass of rocks and nullahs. There was nothing to be done but to knock off and go home. I had walked over twenty

miles, and my beaters were a good deal more tired than I. I promised myself, however, that I would see the big bull again.

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A long interval occurred before I could keep my word. I got a spell of leave of absence and was off to the hills. At the beginning of November, however, I was back again, and sent the *shikari* out to ascertain if the herd was still in the neighbourhood. He brought back the news that it was. It happened that just then a young fellow was staying with me who had only arrived a few days before from England, or rather from Scotland, his name being Mac— —. He was very anxious to have a chance at the big game. So I sent the *shikari* back, promising to meet him at the old trysting-place.

Mac—— had no rifle; I lent him one of my pair of 12-bores. Next morning we drove out to the ground in a hired tonga, our breakfast following in my bullock-cart, for which I hoped we should have another use before the day was out.

The herd, we found, were lying in the big jungle. At the first drive we moved them, but the ground was rather more than two guns could cover, and they passed without being seen by either of us. As far as I could make out they had gone towards the hills, rather to the west of the valley where I had stalked them some six weeks before. Here there was a long valley which ran parallel with the edge of the plain, from which it was separated by the main hill. It communicated with the plain by a gorge at right angles to both, which entered the valley about a third of the way up.

I ordered the *shikari* to take Mac—— round to

the west of the valley and place him behind the ridge up to which it ran, with the main road behind him. I would enter the valley by the gorge, while the beaters went to the east and beat it right along.

Before the beaters reached me, I saw an animal moving up the valley far above me. My glass soon showed it to be the bull, and I felt sure that I should not get a shot. However, I ordered the beaters to stand still and hurried towards him, taking advantage of every possible bit of cover. Of course, it was no use; before I was within two hundred yards of him he moved on again, only to halt right on the sky-line. Very fine he looked, the position increasing his natural size, which was about that of an Alderney bull. Presently he moved slowly over the ridge and was lost to sight.

Almost immediately, and as I had expected, I heard a shot, followed in a minute by another. I hurried up to the crest, where I found Mac—— and the *shikari*, but no bull. Mac—— told me that the brute had commenced to descend to his right. When it was nearly parallel with him he fired, and it at once broke back. Remembering, doubtless, that I was behind him it again made downwards, this time to his left. Again he fired, but the bull did not stop and was lost to their sight. Without waiting for the beaters we hastened in pursuit. Not a hundred yards on we found the bull lying under a small tree stone-dead. He was the finest I have ever seen, his winter coat being nearly black, while in summer they are of blue-grey. One horn was nine inches long; the other, being splintered, was somewhat shorter. Jerdon, in the 'Mammals of India,' gives the length of the horns from seven to nine inches, so this is an extreme

length. The bullet had hit him in the back ribs, and, as it was on the left, it was the second barrel that had caused his death. This shows the killing power of a 12-bore rifle.

I sent for the bullock-cart, and caused it to be tipped up close to the bull. Even then it took the united efforts of all the beaters, a dozen men, to get it into the cart. We then went off to our breakfast.

In the afternoon we beat out the jungle I had traversed six weeks before, but with no result. At the far end of it we had our tonga waiting. The road in proved a bad one; we had a miserable pair of ponies, and it was long after dark before we got home.

Of course, I was glad my guest should have some luck, but it certainly was a fair example of the irony of sport. The very brute after whom I had toiled so long on a hot day, falls to the rifle of another, who had only walked an hour or so on a cool winter morning to get him. On the whole, I always look back to it as an instance of very hard luck.

CHAPTER VI.

A CHRISTMAS WEEK IN HAMPSHIRE.

HAMPSHIRE, from a hunting point of view, is rather a weak brief to take up, some people will say. Well, perhaps it is; but in common honesty I have to admit that I have some enjoyable recollections of that county of ploughs, hops, and woodlands. I had better say at once that of the greatest Hampshire woodland of all, the New Forest, I do not propose to speak in this paper, but rather to see if I can recall some pleasant days in the open.

Passing by my first season in Hampshire—a short one, and one of the worst on record everywhere—I come at once to the second, which was five years later. As before, Aldershot was my headquarters. This, probably, is about the very worst centre for Hampshire hunting—especially for those who do not use the train.

Christmas week, however, afforded some decent sport. It began really on the Saturday before. On that day the H.H., meeting at the Golden Pot, found a fox at Shaldon a few minutes before one. Of course he wanted to make for Weston Common—that bugbear of hunting in north-east Hampshire. However, for once the combined vocal efforts of the

field succeeded in driving our fox from his point, and exactly at the hour he broke over Blounce Farm. At first hounds were able to drive him at a good pace, but the farther we went the worse things seemed to get.

Fencing, of course, in that country there was little or none, but to hound-lovers the run was of some interest. Patiently the huntsman and hounds worked out the line, till at last, just as I was beginning to think it was all U P, the huntsman got a view a few fields on, and capped the pack on to it. This changed the aspect of affairs altogether, and at eight minutes past two hounds pulled their fox down in a hedgerow close to Crondall. This was very convenient for the Aldershot party, who mostly went home.

The following Wednesday was Boxing Day, and a cheerful holiday crowd had assembled to meet the Chiddingfold at the lofty elevation of Hindhead, where, and in the neighbouring district of Haslemere, I believe, nowadays, a colony of cockneyfied villas has spung up.

There cannot be many prettier spots in England for foot-people to see drawn by hounds than the Punchbowl at Hindhead, and this Boxing Day they were clustered in hundreds round its upper acclivities, while hounds worked their way through the gorse and heather below. It reminded one more of Exmoor hunting than anything else.

Ere long a fox was on foot and broke away to the eastward. At first hounds were rather inclined to string one after another through the high growth, but presently the going became better for them, and the foot-people saw the last of us. For half an hour they ran fast, and by that time they had got into the big

woodlands, where an awkward turn or two threw out the bulk of the field. The second half-hour was a good deal slower, but hounds stuck to their fox well, and finally pulled him down near the Round House, exactly one hour after the find.

It was not long before we found again in these woodlands, but the line hounds picked up was evidently that of a fox who had been disturbed by them when running their first. He was too far ahead, and we had to give it up.

After some time we found again, at Wormley Hill this time, and had a capital thirty-five minutes to Broadwater, where we unfortunately changed foxes, so I went home.

Next day, the 27th, the Ripley and Knaphill Harriers were at Rickford Mill. By the way, this is perhaps rather Surrey than Hants, but it is all on the border. Mr Dubourg had a deer for us—and one of the right sort. Hounds went away a cracker for Guildford. Right through the railway station they ran and down the river Wey—we clattering through the streets to the delight of the inhabitants of the pretty old town. I recollect I got down to the river bank by negotiating one of the most awkward obstacles I ever jumped—a flight of rails built across a low railway arch. Fortunately, I was riding about the best timber jumper I ever owned, and she popped through without banging my head against the top of the arch.

There was the deer—at soil in the flooded Wey, the hounds baying on the bank. However, presently he was obliging enough to break his bay, for it would have been impossible to reach him, and on he went by Shalford Church, and lay up in a little wood beyond.

Hounds were stopped and the whip sent to eject him.

He evidently took the crack of the whip which he received as an intimation to put his best foot foremost, for he took us at a rare pace to Chilworth, and then turned up over the downs to Merrow.

I don't think I ever saw hounds run faster than they did here. Without a fence of any kind to stop us, the little beauties (fox-hound bitches, by the way) ran clean away from us all on the open downs. But we soon overtook them puzzling out the line in some coverts above Merrow. From Merrow village the deer ran on to Clandon Station, following roughly the line of the (then) new railway. This part of the run was rather woodland and a good deal slower. Finally, we took our deer in the outhouse to a keeper's cottage at Clandon Common.

Next day the Chiddingfold were at Puttenham. They found at Pepperharrow, and ran for an hour and a quarter in those great woodlands till the fox got to ground, when, feeling an attack of my old enemy, the gout, coming on, I left them.

In spite of my having passed a sleepless night, the morning of Saturday, the 29th, saw me in the saddle again early, for I had a long jog before me to meet the H.H. at Sutton Common.

Winny Copse, as usual, was good for a fox, and, equally as usual, our fox made for Weston Common and thence to Froyle Park, where he beat them. About this period the gout beat me too, although I had only one boot and one gaiter on, and reluctantly enough I turned my horse's head for home.

Now, have I not made out some case for North Hants? Here in a week, or rather eight days, I

hunted five, and if I had had leisure (and horses) could have hunted one more, the other two being Sunday and Christmas Day. Of these five days the first showed up a fair hunting run; the second, two nice gallops; and the third plenty of fun, although I will not pretend to rank the chase of the carted deer very high among field sports. As for the last two, but for my physical disablement, my diary might chronicle better sport on those, for on each occasion I can only speak to the doings with the morning fox.

The frost came with the New Year, and I only got three days at its conclusion before my route came and moved me on to

"Fresh woods and pastures new."

Except in the New Forest, I have hunted but little in Hampshire since.

CHAPTER VII.

ON THE WEST COAST OF CEYLON.

It was many years ago, in the earliest eighties, that the facts I am about to relate took place. My old and valued friend, Will B——, occupied at the time a position of responsibility in the Judicial Branch of the Civil Service at Colombo. It was not a post which did justice to his abilities nor to his activity, which a score of years' consecutive residence in the low country of Colombo had not impaired. Alas! it did impair his constitution, for he returned to England some half a dozen years after only to die. Light may the earth lie on the best of good fellows, lightest-hearted of Irishmen, and truest of friends!

"I am getting pretty sick of Colombo and the Courts," said he to me one day. "Let's go for a trip somewhere."

"All right, if it doesn't cost too much," said I.

The next question was where. After some discussion we decided on the west coast. Our plans were soon made. They consisted in starting from Negombo, connected with the capital by a line of steamers, and working up the coast, completing our trip so as to return to one of the coast ports in time to catch the monthly Colonial Government steamer

which would bring us home. Leave having been obtained from our respective chiefs, we proceeded to get our tents and other equipment together.

A few days before our start—which, by the way, was to be made on Christmas Eve—a letter came to Will from a native, or rather half-caste subordinate, in the Government Agent's office at Negombo, who, hearing we were coming, wrote to offer to arrange a drive for us on the day after our arrival. Will had been stationed at the place some years before this, and was of opinion that the writer was a sporting chap, and would probably get us some shooting, so we accepted the offer. This involved sending tents and servants on the day before with instructions to pitch the camp near the spot where the drive was to take place.

At last all was ready, and early on the day fixed we drove down through the unsavoury native town to the jetty in the river. The steamer, a little ramshackle affair with wheezy engines, was crowded with natives; but a place was soon cleared for us, and we started. The first part of the route is up the Kelaniganga river. Before we had gone a quarter of a mile we ran aground on a sandbank. The crew and several of the passengers jumped overboard, and after unheard-of exertions got her off. When the steamer was at last got off the screw refused to move, a rope having fouled it. It took another ten minutes to cut this away, and I began to think we should never get fairly started. At last, however, we sighted the Leper Hospital, which marks the entrance to the long canal which unites the river with the Lake of Negombo. The canal is monotonous and uninteresting in the extreme, but

it enabled us to have our breakfast in peace before we emerged into the lake. This is, properly speaking, a lagoon, as it communicates with the sea. On this occasion it was decidedly rough for inland water, and there was a strong breeze blowing right in our teeth. The steamer puffed and snorted, but made little progress. I had rolled up my shirt-sleeves for coolness, regardless of the spray which blew over us at intervals. I was, however, to have cause to remember it. At last we reached our destination, some three hours after time. We amused ourselves in the evening by watching a cricket match between native teams, and "doing" Negombo, a dull little place, but prettily situated. When we went to get ready for dinner at the rest-house, I found my hands, arms, and face were becoming intolerably painful. The sun and wind, aided by the salt spray, had made them almost raw. Will was also suffering, but not so badly. Fortunately the Government Agent's wife kindly sent us some glycerine and rose-water, which allayed the pain. But for this I hardly think I could have continued our journey, and as it was I could scarcely bear my coat on for some days. The Ceylon sun is quite powerful enough without salt water: I have often had my sleeves burnt red through a drill-coat when out shooting.

Next morning we were up betimes, and after a hasty "early tea" we found our host waiting for us with a ramshackle dog-cart. He was one of those Portugo-Dutch-Cingalese so common in the island, his name Fernandez de Silva. He was very talkative, and a keen sportsman. He was very proud of his "breech-loading rifle," which rather

amused us. The rifle had evidently been a single-barrelled muzzle-loader, to which an ingenious native had attached a Snider action. In this he used Snider cartridges; but as the bore seemed to me to be rather more than ·577, the bullets must have taken the grooving very little, if at all. However, as will be seen, he managed to kill something with it.

After a tedious drive, changing horses half-way, we reached the place where the beaters were waiting. Several of them, to my horror, carried old muskets and came round begging us for bullets. I gave one of them a 12-bore one, which was much too large for his gun; but by cutting slices off it he hammered it down on to a handful of powder.

The ground we were to beat consisted of some tracts of high jungle adjoining the cocoa-nut plantation. I was posted where a sort of path formed an angle, and the other two guns went on. The path was so narrow that it was obvious the rifle would not be of much use, so I put buckshot cartridges in my gun and leant the rifle against a tree. All was silent.

I wonder has anybody ever described a curious phenomenon which I have often in my young days noticed when big-game shooting? You stand waiting for perhaps half an hour, till, suddenly changing the direction of your glance, you see among the trees the object of your search. So it was with me in this case. I looked to my right, and there, looking straight at me in the bushes, was a noble axis stag. I could see him so distinctly that I could almost count the points on his horns. I half raised my gun—but how unnaturally still he stands. Am I

deceived? Surely not. Yet something tells me not to fire. At last I aim and whistle. Not a movement; and then the horns gradually dissolve into branches, the outline of the limbs is made by growing trees and a stump, the very sparkle of the eye proves to be a dewdrop. It is almost difficult now to distinguish the outlines which had so nearly deceived me.

Hark! a shot from the beaters and a shout recall me from my reflections on optical delusions; and I hear something coming hastily through the bushes. A spotted stag with his antlers laid back springs into the path, only to go down with a broken shoulder. Running up to him, I perform the last rites. Before the end of the beat a porcupine, with his ridiculous quills rattling with wrath, bustles into the path. He is good to eat and a deadly enemy to the young cocoa-nut trees, so he gets the contents of a barrel in his head.

I will not go on to recount the incidents of the day. Suffice it to say that the bag was made up of three "spotted deer" (*Axis maculata*), one "red deer," one porcupine, sundry hares, and a diminutive pig—which last, greatly to his delight, fell to our host's "breech-loading rifle."

When we had finished, we dismissed our host[1] and made for our camp. I had omitted to say that our good friend the Government Agent at Negombo had kindly sent his travelling bullock-cart out for our use. It was a most comfortable affair, with a painted roof and long enough to sleep in. Before

[1] In the East it is always the etiquette for Europeans to *dismiss* natives of however exalted rank at the end of an interview. In fact no native thinks of leaving till told he may do so.

going our host gave us a key, which he said belonged to a drawer underneath it, which we should find most useful, as it was practically waterproof. In this we stowed our ammunition.

Our battery for this trip, where the bag was most likely to consist of deer, consisted of two ·450 Express rifles and our 12-bore guns, which were both cylinders and capable of taking a bullet with five drachms of powder.

Next day, according to our orders, a start was made before daylight. We simply spread our mattresses in the travelling cart and slept quietly on.

The sun had been up some time when we came to a river, which in the rains was no doubt a formidable affair. At present it showed a good deal of sandbank, and our driver, who knew the way, bumped us confidently down the bank. I had resumed my recumbent position, but Will was sitting in his pyjamas at the front of the cart. Without my noticing it he reached for a rifle. They were hanging in slings at the sides of the cart. The driver's protest, "*Mahatma!*" (sir, sir), roused me, and I turned round just in time to see Will aiming at one of a couple of alligators who were basking on a sandbank.

Bang! went the rifle, and in spite of the driver's best endeavours the bullocks bolted into deep water. In less than a minute the smart cart was upset, and Will, I, driver, bullocks, and, for all I knew, the alligators too, were all struggling for the opposite shore. The incident ended better than might be expected; for, the cart being closed in behind like a London tradesman's cart, nothing was lost except Will's socks — which served him right. Although

everything was sopping wet, the weather and water were both warm, and we were soon at work drying and cleaning ourselves and our property on the opposite bank. Fortunately most of our things and all our stores were in the country cart, which was following, and the ammunition, being in the tight-fitting drawer, had escaped. I have always rifle cartridges soldered up in tin cases holding ten; but to have had our gun cartridges wetted would have been a serious loss.

Will was so penitent that I couldn't abuse him as he deserved for his recklessness, which, after all, had had no serious consequences; but as it was obvious there would be a long delay here, we decided to camp till after dinner. I may add that the bullocks never forgot the incident, and refused absolutely to allow a European to get into the cart, so that we had to make a swap with those in the other vehicle. After we had had some breakfast we started off up the river with our guns, and shot some teal, snipe, and hares.

Dinner being over, our beds were laid in the cart, and the bullocks moved off at their usual pace (about two miles an hour), while we smoked till we were sleepy and then dropped off. We awoke to find daylight breaking over the camp, which was pitched among some fairly open ground, broken with clumps of jungle. We took our rifles and moved off in opposite directions. I was out some hours, but only saw three does just as I was giving it up. Meat was wanted in camp; so after a fairly easy stalk I shot one, and, marking the place, returned to camp to send for it. Will was in before me, having seen no quadrupeds, and only bagged a

young peacock. This was a welcome addition to our table, but the Express bullet had made rather a mess of it. Pea-fowl have a habit of sitting sunning themselves on stumps and dead trees in the early morning, and often afford pretty shots for the rifle; but a rook rifle should be used. This is almost the only way one can get a shot at them in Ceylon, where they are very shy. In India, of course, being sacred, they are tame enough. I have often thought when, in beating hillsides there for big game, the pea-fowl came sailing over my head, what glorious "rocketers" they would make if they would only fly a bit higher. From consideration for the feelings of the natives, and also because they are so tame, they are rarely molested in India, except by Tommy Atkins, who cannot be deterred from shooting them either by stringent orders, or by the prospect of a free fight with a whole village should he be detected.

After breakfast we had another turn, with the guns this time, and bagged some quail and jungle-fowl. It is a pity that the latter bird is so desperate a runner, for when he does get on the wing he resembles a cock-pheasant a good deal. Of course when in hand the resemblance ceases, the bird being in appearance something between a game fowl and a golden pheasant, but with the colouring of the former.

Before we started that night a native for whom Will had sent turned up. Though he had by no means the ability of the east coast trackers, Jim Crow (a perversion of his native name) had often acted as tracker to those Englishmen who had tried their luck on the less well-stocked country about

Chilaw, and it was to act in this capacity that we had sent for him. He informed us that there was a fair amount of game at a place two days off to the north-east, and we told him to instruct the drivers accordingly.

The next camp was not any good for big game, but we got some water-fowl. In the evening Jim Crow said if we liked to put off our start for a few hours, there was a water-hole, where the bears often came to drink, near the camp. Will absolutely declined to sacrifice his slumbers, but I, who was younger and keener, said I would go. Jim Crow accordingly went off to arrange a stand for us, and after dinner I accompanied him thither.

To sit up for possible game in the tropics one must be very keen, for the discomfort is very great. The stand only consisted of a couple of poles to sit on; the mosquitoes, whose numbers were easily accounted for by the presence of water, were maddening, and of course I couldn't smoke. After straining my eyes for about an hour (for there was no moon), I noticed the tracker was fast asleep and threatening to drop off his perch, he was nodding so violently. I gave him a shake and roused him, although I could hardly help feeling it was a pity he should not drop into the pool and thus obtain the bath, of which, if I could rely on my olfactory organs, he stood so greatly in need.

Shortly afterwards I heard a stick snap to my right, and all my senses were on the alert at once. I hastily retouched my sights with a little piece of phosphorus I carried on purpose, and listened intently. It was evident from the sound that one or more heavy animals were coming down to drink.

At last I felt sure I saw something moving in the deep shade of some wild mango-trees. I half raised my rifle, leaning forward to try and distinguish a head or a tail, or anything which could guide me as to where to aim and also as to what the animals really were.

Just at that moment a sonorous snore from my left broke the silence. Crash! went the buffaloes—for such they proved to be—through the jungle, and my chance was gone. A sound cuff aroused Master Jim Crow from his slumbers, to hear such language as I trust I have not often been guilty of. I can certainly plead extreme provocation, but for five minutes or so the recording angel must have been pretty busy with my page. At length I felt I had verbally and manually done my utmost to rouse Master Jim Crow to a sense of his sin, and not feeling inclined to persevere after such a crushing blow, I descended the tree. After lighting our lantern I examined the spoor. Buffaloes they certainly were, and apparently one was a bull, for the hoofs were a great deal bigger than the others. I lit a cheroot and made for the carts, which were soon under way for our next camp.

I did not feel inclined to go out next morning, so Will went alone and shot a buck axis. He told me he had seen a good lot of bear spoor, and Jim Crow swore he knew "berry good tank," so I agreed to go again.

I had been waiting over the "berry good tank," which turned out to be a small, dirty-looking pond, about an hour and a half. I need hardly say that this time I had not failed to keep a sharp eye on Jim, pushing him whenever I noticed he remained

long in one position. All at once, without a sound to warn me, two bears appeared coming straight down to the pool. When they got there I aimed at one and fired. Before I could note the effect of the shot he reared up and attacked his companion, growling fiercely. The other, who was nothing loth for a fight (when is a Ceylon bear? — the most cantankerous and evil-dispositioned little wretch on the face of the earth), at once grappled with him, and they waltzed round and round biting and clawing savagely. Meanwhile, I afforded them an accompaniment to their dance by emptying my rifle three times into the pair. At last one dropped dead, and the other, after sniffing at him, moved slowly off, I firing my last two cartridges at him as he went. We descended the tree, and I sent Jim Crow off for the carts. When these arrived I got some fresh cartridges, and accompanied by Will in pyjamas and slippers, and by Jim Crow with a lantern, we proceeded to look for bear number two. I need hardly say we proceeded cautiously, for a Ceylon bear in the daytime and unprovoked is a dangerous beast, so what would he be wounded and in the dark? However, our caution was unnecessary, for a score of yards away we found him also dead. Having seen him put in the baggage-cart, we turned in and soon dropped off, to the accompaniment of creaking axles and the "Dah! dah!"[1] of the drivers.

I may here add that when we came to examine the bears next day, we found one bear had been hit by two bullets and one by three. This gives an average of 50 per cent of hits at about seventy yards. I should call this a good average in the

[1] The Ceylon bullock-driver's equivalent for "Come hup."

dark, and this explains (with the discomfort) why this night-work is so unpopular with sportsmen. Sitting up means certain discomfort, possibly no game seen, and very fluky shooting if it is dark, whereas if there is a moon it is almost worse.

Our supply of rice was running short, for though we had cut our staff as low as possible, we had eight persons to feed besides ourselves. So we reluctantly gave orders to prepare for a start coastwards after dinner that night.

We were in luck that morning, and each shot a buck axis. As we were returning to camp, Jim Crow caught my arm and pointed to a bush about forty yards off. The bush was shaking violently, and a patch of shaggy black hair was visible. It was Will's shot. Without waiting to see more clearly he fired. The bear at once dropped from the tree, and with no more ado charged straight at us, growling fiercely. Will fired again, and the bear turned off into the jungle. Fortunately there was time for me to fire, and he dropped to the shot, got up and charged again, when Will killed him.

The Ceylon bear, as I have said, is the most savage little wretch on the face of the earth, and in the north of the island, where they are most common, many of the natives are marked by their teeth and claws, these wounds being generally inflicted in entirely unprovoked attacks. Even in captivity they are savage. A friend of mine had one which he called "John the Baptist." Although he had been taken from his dead mother when not a foot long, it was dangerous for any one to approach within reach of the chain which was fastened to

a strap round his waist. I recollect an amusing incident about this bear. The Archdeacon, when on a journey, happened to put up at my friend's house, and was duly introduced to the bear.

"But why," asked the man of both worlds, "do you call him John the Baptist?"

"Because he wears a leathern girdle round his loins and is very fond of honey." The Archdeacon laughed heartily.

To return, however, to our trip. We travelled again that night, towards the coast this time. In the morning we went out with our rifles. In a piece of fairly open ground we saw a herd of axis. We began our stalk, but to our disgust, just as we were getting near them, they bounded to their feet and made off. I was greatly puzzled to account for this, as they had not looked our way and could not have got our wind.

The mystery, however, was soon explained. From behind the slope which had hidden him walked a fine leopard, looking after the retreating deer. He was about a hundred and twenty yards off. It was Will's shot.

"Better take the shot," I said. "He's standing quite still now, and if we try to stalk him he is just as likely to move off after the deer."

Will lay down and took a steady shot. The leopard disappeared. We walked across, and found him lying dead, shot through the heart.

Three days after we were at Chilaw. We had to stop there some days waiting for the steamer, but managed to kill time snipe- and teal-shooting, and looking after our trophies. Our total bag was

as follows: fourteen spotted deer, two "red deer," three bears, one porcupine, one leopard, one pig (a very large boar I shot when sitting up one night by mistake for a bear),—total, twenty head of big game. Besides this we had killed three pea-fowl, some jungle-fowl and quail, and a number of teal and snipe.

Times are changed since then, and I doubt if a couple of sportsmen would be able to kill two head of big game over the same ground in the same time.

CHAPTER VIII.

FOX-HUNTING—EARLY AND LATE.

In no part of England, with the exception perhaps of the New Forest, is the "sport of kings, the image of war," carried on so early and so late as on those great moorlands which take their names from the two rivers to which they give birth—the Exe and the Dart.

As is well known, regular fox-hunting—as opposed to cub-hunting—begins generally throughout England at the beginning of November, and dies a natural death at a period varying according to the forwardness of the season between the third week in March and the second in April. But on Exmoor and Dartmoor things are different. The question of crops affects the matter not at all, and even the delicate subject of lambing need enter slightly into the Master's calculations. Besides, as these hounds find their fox as often as not on the open moor, it is an easy matter to see whether the object of chase is a desirable one or not. In other words, the hounds can be easily stopped off a gravid vixen or let go if they happen on an old dog-fox, without any risk of leaving an interesting family motherless.

Some years ago it was my fate to be an eye-witness of some of these early and late days with the Exmoor and Dartmoor Foxhounds, and both, strange to say, in the same season, and I propose to describe one day of each kind, so as to give my readers an idea of how the English national sport is carried on in these wild and unpopulated districts.

The meet fixed for October 15, 18—, was in many respects a typical Exmoor one. In the first place, was not the trysting-place the house of that noted Exmoor sportsman and pony-breeder, Sir Frederick Winn Knight? Secondly, though the said house lies low and warm in the pretty little valley of Simonsbath, it also lies near the wildest and "wettest" (*i.e.*, boggiest) ground on the whole of Exmoor.

An Exmoor field presents little resemblance to the smart scarlet-clad crowd which is to be seen at the gatherings of a Midland pack. On this occasion the field was a large one, for be it known the autumn is the "season" on Exmoor, when scores of sportsmen foregather for the chase of the wild red deer. Among that field only one "pink" is to be seen, however,—that worn by the whip. Even the Master is in mufti. The Master in those days was Mr Snow, the Squire of Oare. Though the best-tempered man in the world, there is one sore point on which he may be roused. Ask him if he is descended from the "Farmer Snow" mentioned in *Lorna Doone*, and you will be somewhat sharply told that the Snows were Squires of Oare long before the days of James II. Indeed, though advancing years have forced him to resign the

horn to younger hands, I dare say it would even now be somewhat dangerous for Mr R. D. Blackmore to show his face in the domains of the last Squire of Oare.

Besides the natives there is a sprinkling of regular visitors, who never miss their annual stag-hunting on Exmoor, and some whom chance has brought there.

After hospitable entertainment a move is made, the first draw being a covert known as Cornham Brake. Here there was at least one fox, for hounds, by heading first towards Duredon and then turning short back, managed to throw out the bulk of the field, who never saw them again. Grexy Ball, I am told, is the name of the first ridge we top, and then we find ourselves on the well-known Moles' Chamber, one of the wettest and highest parts of the moor. Very bleak and barren the short grass is here, too. We are riding over treacherous ground indeed, intersected as it is with small grips and drains. Several coats are mud-plastered already, and there are a few riderless horses about. A bad job for their riders this, for a horse lost on the moor is no joke, but the pace is too good to afford assistance. Hounds have been running very fast all this time, and when we emerge on Bray Common our fox seems to have had enough, for without apparent reason he turns short back and retraces his steps for Grexy Ball, hounds running harder than ever. Here he finds temporary shelter in a rabbit-hole, very few of the original field being up at the "Who-whoop!" after this capital fifty-five minutes gallop.

While we lead our smoking steeds about, Reynard

is extracted from his refuge—for blood is a necessity at the beginning of the season—and the brush is taken to Lady Knight.

Now let us turn to the Dartmoor. A meet there is a more full-dress affair than that I have last presented to the reader, for the nearness of the large garrison town of Plymouth alone accounts for a score of "pinks" and "blacks." Among the hunt servants is one official who, I believe, is unknown with any other English pack. This is the "terrier-boy," an urchin in scarlet, who carries in the two leather bags behind his saddle two hard-bitten fox-terriers with their heads peeping out. The reason for this is that there are on Dartmoor many great masses of rocks which cannot be stopped, and as foxes often make for these, it is necessary to have terriers at hand to bolt them. These hounds, at the time I write of, were hunted by a professional huntsman.

On the day I am going to try and bring before my readers there is very little "pink" to be seen—only the hunt servants in fact, for is it not the 4th of May and a hot day at that? Filham Village is the meet, and Filham Furze the draw. There is a fox here sure enough, but the eager foot-people head him back. However, there is a rare scent in spite of the heat, and he must go or die. The next attempt to reach the moor is more successful, and away go the hounds at a pace which is simply terrific. The Rifle Butts and Hangershell fly past, and we reach the ridge overlooking Pyles—alas! only to see hounds marking where the "varmint" has saved himself by taking refuge in that well-known stronghold. Only a quarter

of an hour's gallop, but it was nearly a four-mile point, and our horses are white with lather.

The next draw is a covert near Hangershell, called Dowse's Brake, and it is soon "Tally-ho away!" again. He makes for Pyles—oh, horror!—but fortunately before getting there bears to the left, thus bringing us into some very nasty complications of walls and water.

The great hill called Halldon Barrow lies before us now, and just as we are congratulating ourselves on the fox having skirted it, hounds turn up it and we must follow. We emerge on Storr Moor, hounds far in front and running very hard. At Yadsworthy they leave the moor and enter the enclosures. Most of the field stick to the moor, and we never see them again.

What a pace they go over these fields! Here is a river—no time to ask which. Through it we splash and toil up to Harford village. As we clatter down the village street we see hounds running just behind the cottages. We sweep to the left at the church. See! the fox tops the wall and lands in the road as the leading hounds reach the wall. At the opposite wall his strength fails. Who-whoop! Who-whoop!

We look round; where is the huntsman? Where the field? Echo answers, where? Only four of us saw the last half of that glorious thirty minutes. Well, that countryman has a knife. The last honours are performed, and the fox eaten ten minutes before the field turn up. This year we shall be among the very few who have seen a May fox killed.

CHAPTER IX.

ROE-SHOOTING IN THE BALKANS.

The sun was struggling with the dense white mist as I drew up the door of the tent at about half-past seven. Here, down by the river, its rays had not yet penetrated, and the grass was still white with rime, but that hillside which faced east was bathed in sunshine. The air was keen, and the thickness of the ice on a bucket outside the door proved that the frost had been sharpish. I was glad to return to the genial warmth of the stove, which my man had lighted half an hour before. By the time I had despatched my breakfast the sun had cleared off the mist, and I started off with one hound, Dinah, in leash. After crossing the bridge I was again in shadow, and felt glad enough of a thick kilt and shooting-coat. I struck off up the valley opposite my camp, and followed a hill path which kept on crossing and re-crossing the meandering rivulet. I did not meet a soul on my way, and after a little more than half an hour my path led into a dense covert. As I crossed the stream for the eighth time, I passed a tumbledown mill to my left; few of these mountain streams but have one or two, to which the mountain villagers bring their corn many miles. This one,

however, was deserted this morning. As we gradually ascended through the woodland Dinah got a whiff or two of last night's drag, probably that of a hare, and became less amenable to the leash. However, she had to restrain her eagerness a good bit yet. At the end of an hour's sharp walk, a convenient fallen tree invited repose, so, tying up the bitch, I sat down and filled a pipe. Before it was smoked out Dinah had become very restless, and finally broke out into a whine, by which she meant, "How much of this beautiful morning are we going to waste like this?" A beautiful morning it was, certainly, for there was not a cloud in the sky; nor was it cold, even down here in the glen, where the sun had not reached, and probably never did reach. Not much like the middle of November to-day. We continued our way, and where a little mountain torrent—now dry—had made a side valley, the dead leaves, elsewhere white with hoar-frost, showed a black spot. A roebuck had been turning them over since the frost, as Dinah's waving stern testified. Very well, especially as it was at this very spot I had meant to leave the track. I commenced the climb of the ridge between the main and side glens—a somewhat arduous one, and rendered no easier by the fact that the drag seemed pretty strong here, making the bitch decidedly troublesome to lead. However, up I went, and passed the covert limit to enter that of the pines. By this time I was warm enough, in spite of a cool wind from the southward, and was glad to unbutton my coat and to pocket my neck-handkerchief. At last the climb was done, and I reached what German sportsmen called the *wechsel*. We have no word for the regular, though often invisible, path four-footed game

follows;[1] albeit the fact of there being such a thing must have been known to old-time Englishmen, for Horace alludes to it, and I dare say Xenophon too. (If they had only, in our school-days, let us construe the hunting part of his works, I daresay I should have made more progress therewith than I ever did with those wearisome *Ten Thousand*.)

"Now go, Dinah, and see if you can find one of those brown-coated little gentlemen, lying where the covert is thickest, and peacefully working his little white lower jaw backwards and forwards under his black velvety muzzle, till the provender collected during his morning's foraging is all duly disposed of. And, having found him, give him no peace till he crosses the ridge. Now, hie in."

The bitch, however, shows little desire to go. The drag all round here is delightfully fresh, and she revels in it for some minutes. Round and round she circles, her stern lashing her sides; but at last the circles grow wider and wider, and she disappears from view. More and more faintly the sound of the bell on her collar reaches my ears, and at last dies away. All is still,—relatively, that is, for far up the main valley I hear the sound of an axe. In two directions cattle-bells break the silence, and still farther away the monotonous droning of a herd-boy's pipe sounds among the hills. It sounds exactly like those used by the Indian *samp-wallahs* (snake-charmers), and carries my thoughts back years, to the days when we sat sweltering in the verandah to

[1] On Exmoor, the places where the red deer pass, especially through the close high beech hedges, are locally known as "deer racks." These, however, are visible enough, though to the uninitiated they appear very small for the size of the animal that makes them. *Vide* chapter xvi.

pass half an hour by watching what we had seen a hundred times before. I can see it all now,—the almost nude figure, with his cobra half erect and moving in unison with his movements, the crowd of white-robed servants at a respectful distance, the—— Hark! the bell-like tones of the hound break the day-dream off short, and I turn cautiously half round so as better to command the passes. There are two of these, a fact which stern experience taught me, for ignorance of the fact lost me a buck here not long since. One runs just above me, the other diagonally below, but both are within easy range. The bitch found not far away, but no doubt some waft of the treacherous south wind has betrayed me, for the sounds descend the hill, and then cease. The deer has utilised the brook to kill the scent. Dinah can be trusted to make her own casts, though, and in a very short time she is merrily tonguing up the opposite slope, and is soon above the covert fringing the stream. It is open enough up there under the great pines; I ought to get a view. Carrying my eyes off to the left, I do. A furlong ahead of the hound a roe is racing along a wood path, and as I think and hope, a buck. At the distance I can see no horns; it would be too cruel if he had cast them already. He turns downwards and the covert swallows him. High time, too, for the bitch was gaining; and she too makes the downward turn without hesitation. When she reaches the brook her voice ceases; the deer has "beaten the water" again. Perhaps he is coming up! I strain my eyes in vain; and this time the check is longer than the first one. At last the music breaks out again, behind me this time, in the side valley. I have barely turned in that direction before I hear a

stone rolling, and the sound guides my eyes to the deer. The hillside is so steep that it moderates even his pace, and I can scan him (for it is a buck) carefully. His horns are all right, and of fair size.

On the ridge he pauses one fatal moment to look back. Bang! The hills re-echo the report, and the buck lies kicking. I hurry towards him as soon as I have reloaded. Poor fellow! but euthanasia soon follows. As my *skean-dhu* finds the fatal spot between skull and vertebra, the soft eyes glaze at once.

The other day I was reading an article by Mr Andrew Lang, in which he says that as the sportsman grows older "he ceases to be sanguinary." If this is true I never can have been young, for, with the exception of actually noxious and dangerous animals, I think I never killed one without some slight feeling of regret. A cock-pheasant, for instance. There he lies, a crumpled mass of feathers, that a minute ago was a beautiful and harmless creature, enjoying his simple life. What right had I to take it? What—"Mark," and the gun is at the shoulder again, for the sympathy, alas! only comes *after* the shot. A hunted fox again. Well, there I think I can honestly say I never tallied one in my life when another man was carrying the horn. Poor beast, he has given me a capital twenty, thirty, or forty minutes; let those whose business it is view him for themselves, if they can't kill him without. If I were hunting hounds my feelings for them would prevent my sparing him, but that is quite another thing. So he slinks off in peace; but I fear I should be the first to cry "Beautiful!" if the eager bitches

hit it off by themselves. I should have hesitated to make this avowal, perhaps, if I had not seen in *The Field* a similar confession by one of the most gifted of the hunting correspondents of that paper, the "Phantom" of the Belvoir. But with the deer tribe this feeling must, I think, always be strongest, and with the little ones most of all. The smallest I ever shot, which has a Latin name much longer than himself,[1] is known in Ceylon as a "mouse deer," but he is rather larger than that animal, being, in fact, when full grown, as large as a hare. But of European animals the roe, in my opinion, is the most deserving of sympathy, and fares worst of all, being mostly shot with a "scatter gun," even in Germany, where the maxim, "*Zum Wild dasz auf Schalen geht, gehört die Kugel,*"[2] obtains.

Meanwhile Dinah has come up, and is snuffing the buck all over, but not offering to touch it, never having been blooded, and apparently hunting none the worse for it. I take up a foreleg, and make an incision above the knee sufficient to draw the extensor tendon through, and pass the other foreleg between this and the leg itself. The laws of woodcraft dictate this procedure with a roe, whereas we "harde" a hare or rabbit with the tendon of the *hind* leg. I must confess nothing delights me more than this old science (so neglected in England), with its quaint customs and maxims. Why, for instance, should the man who is dressing a stag *never* step over it? It is easier to understand the maxim that, if royalty is present, he must not remove his coat or hat, though this, too,

[1] *Tragulus Stanleyanus.*

[2] "For game with hooved feet
The bullet is meet."

must make the job anything but pleasant on a sweltering autumn day.

The buck—a six-pointer, by the way—is a heavy one, and I am quite satisfied when I have hung him on a pine-tree conspicuously, so that my servant will find him without difficulty later on. I sit down in the winter sun to get my lunch, of which Dinah gets her share. When we have finished, I light my pipe and enjoy the splendid view.

The valley at the side of which I am resting, like most of those hereabouts, ends in a punchbowl-shaped hollow, bordered with fine pine-clad cliffs. Above these is the main range—sheep pastures in summer, but already given up now to the wolf. As far as I could learn, the chamois never come to this valley in winter; probably it, and also the next one lower down, are too small, and too often disturbed. As the valley broadens out below, its sides become cultivated in places, and flecked with huts here and there. Then comes the main valley, and beyond hill above hill, culminating in bare forbidden-looking peaks. Bare as they look, there is pasture enough up there, and it is to them that the European antelope withdraws during the summer heats. A lovely land, yet unlikely to become a tourist resort for many a day, considering that not even a good bridle-road yet traverses it.

But the winter sun is declining towards the west; we must be going. "No, Dinah; sufficient for the day is the buck thereof. You shall not disturb the other

"Native burghers of this desert city

. . . . . .

In their assign'd and native dwelling-place"

to-day. Come to the leash."

So we go quietly homewards. The woods seem

more silent now; only the curious cry of the great black woodpecker breaks the stillness. These neglected woods are a very paradise for all the varieties of this bird. See, there is a lesser spotted one at work. His red head hammers away, and as he turns the branch he shows the same brilliant scarlet underneath. He has not noticed me yet, but as I step forward he does so, looks down, and calmly continues his work. His bigger brother would have alarmed the whole parish. As I pass a fir-tree I stop to pick a green tuft for my cap, following the quaint Austrian fashion of successful sportsmen. Half an hour later I am at home.

To my mind no sport can be more delightful than this combination of shooting and hunting. Two things only are necessary. Firstly, the knowledge where to stand. This the natives of every country can tell one, for there is no village in the world but can produce some fellow with that instinct that makes the poacher (I mean the rustic, not the professional variety) in England. The second *desideratum* is the hound, which must draw well and wide, but perseveringly and musically, and lastly return to his master after a blank draw or an unsuccessful chase. This last is easily taught, but involves the wearisome job of waiting (hours sometimes) for the youngster you are entering. Go home without him, and sooner or later he will return the compliment. As to the breed of hound, the nature of the country in which you hunt must govern the selection. Small woodland and easy ground involves small hounds, dachshunds for choice, but it is so rare that they will draw wide enough, and many are not musical. Here they would never do, for, apart from the difficulties of the ground, the wolf

has a habit of joining in such a chase, and many a beagle has been lost in this manner. Some people use a couple of hounds, but my experience is against the practice, for, if the hounds separate, one may be between you and the deer, and "blanch" him as he is coming straight to the gun.

CHAPTER X.

WITH THE KILLING KILDARES.

If Meath—Royal Meath—be the premier hunting county of Ireland, Kildare runs her pretty close, so close that I doubt if the Kildare men allow the pre-eminence of their neighbour.

Now it so happens that of Meath I can only say *vidi tantum*, for only five times in my life have I hunted there, and of those few days one was with the "Wards" and another with harriers. The latter (the pack has long ceased to exist) showed me the best fun I ever saw in the county. Meeting at Fleenstown, they ran in that very good country for seventy minutes, and straight, thanks to luckily changing hares several times—to the grief and sorrow of the Master (his own huntsman), who, having "taken a toss," arrived only in time to see one of the field holloa his little beauties—for the fifth or sixth time had he known it—on to a fresh bare.

On this occasion, moreover, I jumped (by mistake) what I believe must have been quite the biggest place I ever negotiated. For, putting my mare at a fair ditch, to me, and up-bank with a wattled fence on top, I became aware, when too late, of a yawning gulf beyond—not uncommon in Meath—and beyond that

again a large heap of fresh metal which projected some way into a nasty greasy road. Fortunately, the roan mare was Pembrokeshire born and bred, and that sort always have a leg to spare, and very often two. So with a kick back and an extra effort, apparently in the air, we landed safely with a slither in the road, I am afraid to say how many feet from the top of the big bank.

The week before I had seen the Kildares for the first time, but the sport had been tame, and it was not till a fortnight later that I saw a really good thing with this pack.

A bitter cold day saw us at Saggart Village, the advertised meet. In those days, however, the Land League was a power in the land, and a whisper passed round that the hounds would not come there, but might be heard of towards Johnstown Kennedy. Thitherwards we trotted, only to meet a sight I have never seen elsewhere—a complete pack of fox-hounds all muzzled. Recent losses from poison had, however, been serious.

Turning into a chance field the muzzles were removed and thrust into a sack, which was sent home by a groom. Was it on this day that the covert was surrounded by a yelling mob, in spite of which the hounds got away with their fox, being beaten and pelted with rails as they did so? I forget; but at any rate it was in Kildare that December that I witnessed that sight. This day the gorse, Coolmines by name, held a fox, and the said "vulp" ran down that hill and up Tallaght, sadly blowing our horses. Fortunately they had checked, and we had a little law before they fresh found him in a furzy ditch.

This time he set his mask for the fair city herself,

which lay spread out below us like a map, and reaching the plain near Johnville, led us over big fields and bigger fences to ground at Newlands, near Clondalkin. Is that five miles from the Mansion House? Not more, I fancy; but a few years later they ran to the cemetery by Rathmines, which bears to Dublin the relative position of Wormwood Scrubbs to London.

How memory makes the pen run on! I had not meant to describe this day at all, but this run it was made me vow I would have a season with the Kildares yet, which vow I was enabled to keep some few years later.

When I returned to Kildare, Goodall still carried the horn, and Major St Leger Moore, who had safely steered his way through the Land League troubles, still held the reins of Mastership.

If Meath is a country where blood and "scope" are as necessary as in Leicestershire, Kildare is assuredly the one of all others where a clever horse is necessary. In fact, the cleverest of them tumble about in Kildare. Nothing strikes the Saxon so much as the number of falls he sees when hunting in Ireland. To be sure, nine times out of ten a fall over a bank is nothing, whereas an "imperial crowner" over timber is very often something to remember for life.

In England we are used to seeing a certain class of sportsmen—no longer young and not too desperate thrusters—who can afford to pay a round figure for a safe conveyance, hunt day after day, and perhaps not have a fall in the season. Nothing struck me more in Ireland than the sight of such Nimrods often with dirty backs. The explanation was simple; it always began: "It wasn't the horse's fault, but"—

"there was a binder on the bank," or "the bank broke," or no matter what. The fact remains that there are more falls on the other side of the Channel, and that not only among the young, active, and not too wealthy, but also among their seniors, who fall less lightly, and can afford to pay for safety.

Now what was the best run I ever saw in Kildare? As a real fast spin ending with blood, nothing, I think, that I saw can touch a gallop we had from Gingerstown Gorse one day just before the opening of the legitimate season, when they raced from that gorse for five-and-thirty minutes and killed in the laurels at Landestown House. That day is impressed on my memory by the recollection of the fact that a horse of mine had the last of that run absolutely to himself, although (worse luck!) he was not carrying me. Nor was I there to see his prowess, having fallen a victim to that old Kildare trap, a little bank and a big ditch beyond. Although by a violent effort the mare cleared it, she overjumped herself and rolled head over heels with me into the field beyond. My left stirrup hung me up, but a Good Samaritan came to the rescue ere more harm was done than a black eye from a blow with the side of a hoof. I shall always think of him with gratitude, but why—oh, why—did he slip the girths instead of pulling the stirrup-leather out of the bar? Once I was on my feet the others, of course, rode on, and it took me minutes to girth up the impatient little beast. So that at all events was not the best run I *saw* in Kildare.

Then there was a day of another sort, when a fox from Copeland's Gorse gave us a hunting run of no less than an hour and three-quarters, beating us

handsomely at last among the mountains on the Wicklow side of the country. To make open confession, I was funking sadly that day, and cannot claim to have been "in it." I may urge the extenuating circumstance that I was riding the same mare who had given me the above-mentioned fall, and who, though a wonderful timber jumper, was just a little rash for Kildare.

"A more sthragglin' hunt Oi nivir saw in me loife," criticised a stalwart son of the soil whom we passed after running over an hour, and I fear I was among the "sthragglers" that day.

"A run," said Mr Jorrocks[1] (and who can write of fox-hunting without quoting him?), "a run is either a buster—elbows and legs throughout—or it's sharp at first and slow afterwards—or it is slow at first and sharp afterwards." I have just glanced at one of the former class and at one of the second. I think, however, that the best run I saw with the Kildares was of the third class, which Mr Jorrocks goes on to say, "is h'awkard for the fox. The thing improves, just like an h'icecream in the eatin'."

After running a fox to ground in the morning we went off to draw a well-known gorse, by name Mat Conran's. Here there were a brace of foxes, and hounds got away with one. I cannot say that our run was ever slow, but the first part of it was woodland, for our fox made at once for Ballynure Wood. Hence they ran through the Grange Con Woods, practically one with Ballynure, being only separated from it by a little brook, and away by Ballyhook, Rathsallagh, and Cross Keys to Dunlavin Town.

What his point was I know not, but here he was

[1] *Handley Cross*, chap. xxxiii. p. 265, original edition.

headed from it, and turned to the right. Hounds were running very fast now, and fences were big and plentiful. The banks *are* big, too, in the Dunlavin country.

His new point was towards Tynte Park, but again he turned from it to the left by Tober and Lemonstown, making, perhaps, for the Baron de Robeck's covert of Cryhelp. He had to cry "Help," however, or as Mr Jorrocks would say, "*capevi*," before he got there; for, as he crossed a byroad, hounds pulled him down in the gateway of a little farm, the name of which none of us knew, and which did not appear in the Ordnance map. The time was just sixty-three minutes; the distance—well, the local papers called it a ten-mile point, but that it was *not*. Nevertheless, it had been a fast hunting run, and at times more than that.

Riding as I was a Kildare horse, born and broken, who then had never given me a fall, I have rarely enjoyed a run better.

When I left Kildare's green pastures, it certainly did not seem possible that I ever should see them again; and yet not much more than ten years had elapsed when I was rudely surprised, as elsewhere referred to in this book, at the receipt in Cyprus of a telegram informing me that I was gazetted to one of the newly-formed Royal Reserve Regiments, and ordered to join at the Curragh forthwith. And at the Curragh the subsequent hunting season found me.

There were changes in Kildare. Colonel Moore, who had reigned over the hounds when I first saw them in 1887, and in my subsequent sojourns in the country, was out in South Africa with a

Yeomanry Corps; and Colonel de Robeck ruled in his stead. Goodall, too, was gone—not to the Transvaal, but into business, and the huntsman was a son of Bridger Champion's, Lord Zetland's well-known huntsman. He was not with the Kildares long, however, and in the following season the Master took the horn himself.

Some of the regular members of the Kildare field, such as "The Judge," were still to the fore, but "Earlie"[1] and "Trivvy"[2] were no more there to raise a laugh at the covert side. One of the most amusing half-hours I had ever passed was spent with those two men in a blacksmith's forge during a terrific downpour. It seems strange that a man, such good company as "Trivvy," could only produce so dull a hebdomadal record of the Irish chase.

The ladies, too, were there. Not all the same ones, by any means; but any amount of them, as usual in Kildare, and all equally ready to assert the privilege of their sex at the only possible place in the first fence, though about nine-tenths of them must have been well aware that if hounds only ran fast and straight, their share of the entertainment would be but a limited one. No matter: "H—l to the man who wouldn't hunt both," as the old Duhallow Hunt motto ran,—and the woman too, I suppose, in modern days.

The country even was changed. There was much more wire, and the place was traversed by some weird abominations known as "Board of Works Drains," which were neither jumpable, swimable, nor fordable, and of which I have no previous recollection.

I am writing at a disadvantage in being separated

[1] The late Earl of Clonmel. [2] The late Mr O'Connor Morris.

from my diaries, but I think that the second winter of the War was not a brilliant one for sportsmen in Kildare. As far as my memory serves me the best days of the season were Thursdays, as usual; and perhaps the best things a couple of gallops on that day of the week westwards from Bull Hill, a covert I do not seem to have heard of a decade previously. I must honestly own, however, that I played no prominent part in the chase, but like Pomponius Ego in *Handley Cross*, "I complacently resigned my place of leader of the first rank, and contented myself with trotting quietly on, and observing the performance of the others."

The fact is that Kildare is a country in which, as I have said before, it is no use a man's hunting unless he is going to jump; and I may add, it is no use his trying to cut out the work unless he has horses that are used to the country. Nor is it a country that a man who has given up hunting for big-game shooting for eight years should recommence the former in. The fences look rotten and the ditches deep. They both are, as a rule. However, I enjoyed my season vastly, even if I did not compete for the place of honour.

One sad memory I have of that winter. It is that of returning from hunting to the Curragh to see the flag flying half-mast high for the greatest sovereign England has ever seen.

CHAPTER XI.

MY FIRST CHAMOIS.[1]

On one of his hunting days, we are told, Mr Jorrocks had cut himself in shaving, which he considered "werry symptomatic" of sport. On this principle (*i.e.*, that the drawing of blood from the sportsman is likely to be followed by that of the game), I had every right to expect sport on this occasion. The day before, when tightening a tent-peg, I had brought the heavy mallet down on an unnoticed line, which had diverted the blow to my own physiognomy, almost entirely depriving my nose of its cuticle. Nevertheless, heedless of the risk of possible erysipelas from the combined effects of a broiling sun and the snow on my sore face (and, as a matter of fact, I did suffer very considerably), I started at eight o'clock, assuring my anxious spouse, who hated these solitary expeditions, that I should be back to lunch at one without fail. With this view I took nothing with me to eat or drink—nor even to smoke.

But the fates were against me, for, first of all, I missed the wood path I ought to have taken; and, secondly, having placed my rucksack on a fallen tree to sit on whilst waiting for my dachshund, who had

[1] Stalked, I should add. I had shot one in a drive before this.

gone off on the line of a roe-deer, I left it there on rising, and had about half an hour's walk back for it. It was then I discovered that I had not brought my watch. Finally, I gained the object of my journey—a rocky saddle between two great cliffs. In the snow-covered glen beyond there were often chamois. On this occasion it was vacant, but the field-glasses soon picked up three chamois right up at the bottom of the cliffs. One lay down on a ledge of the rock, and the other two went on, and took their quarters up in a curious place, behind the snow which formed a mass detached from the base of the cliff. They kept on coming out for a look, so I guessed they had my wind. In any case, I could not advance far without being seen. Things looked pretty blue, but still I must have a try. An approach from below is almost invariably a failure, but the unexpected is a big element in sport. Indeed, in this part the correct approach from above is all but impossible, for the chamois generally manage to have the cliffs at their back.

Twenty minutes brought me to a snow-filled hollow, where, at any rate, I was out of sight, but had I been detected getting down there? To approach to leeward I must go to my right. I had actually started to do so, when, happening to turn my head, I saw a herd of ten in full scamper behind me, on the lower slopes of the great rock on my left hand, which is like a sitting human figure, and consequently sheer precipice to the front, from the knees down. But the herd kept up the left side till they reached the grass ledge which represents the arms, and disappeared along it, looking exactly like mice in a wheat-stack, which will give the reader some

idea of the height of these cliffs. This particular bit was then quite unknown to me, but I thought it might be possible to follow where the herd had gone. A few minutes' thought convinced me that the three I had seen had formed part of the herd, and that as soon as they had lost sight of me they had scampered back to the others and gone with them. Consequently I changed my plans, and started up the snow-slope of the gully that led to the main precipice to my left front. When near its head, I secured the dachshund and stalked round to the spot where I had seen the three. Nothing to be seen, and a whistle failed to move anything. This proved the correctness of my theory, and I started off after the herd.

I have said that their route lay up and round the big rock which was barely united to the main hill. My first idea was to go right up the steep snow-slope to the cleft between it and the main hill, in the hope of getting a shot from thence. Fortunately, before I got half-way up I began to get very sick of the snow, and of the constant effort and care required, as a slip would have sent me right down to the end of the slope, and probably over the cliffs there too. I therefore decided to follow the herd exactly, though it seemed impossible that they would go up wind without keeping a good look-out in the rear for what had disturbed them. Once I struck the rocks, it was nice going; the grassy terraces were wide and easy, though I would not have gone to the edge and looked down for a trifle. Expecting to come on the game there, I secured the dog to my bag and started stalking. I went right round the conical peak without seeing anything, and just as I felt inclined to give up,

the dog, who had got loose, joined me. Keeping him in to heel, I went a little farther, and all at once I saw the herd on the big snow-field below me. Drawing back, I fastened the dog to my alpenstock with the sling of my gun, and wormed myself out on to the flat projecting rock. Yes, there they were, but only six of them, mostly lying on the snow, and all unsuspicious of my presence. They were, however, too far for my weapon, say three hundred yards off. But below me was another rock-ledge which must be a good deal nearer. I crawled back to the dog, and retired cautiously a hundred yards or so. There I left my gun, and started back, for the second time that day, for my rucksack. When I had got it I returned; and this time I was careful to tie the dog well. I had not long begun the crawl downwards, when I heard some stones rattle in front of me, and concluded the herd were coming back. Here again my geography was at fault; not even a chamois could come up there, and the stone was probably dislodged by the snow. After sitting expectant a quarter of an hour, I decided to advance again; and, to make a long story short, after a lot of hands-and-knees work, and a bad fright at a stone which looked just like a chamois staring at me, I reached the spot whence they should have been in view. Gone! I was not much frightened, though, for the broad snow-field to my right and front was spread out like a map before me. I continued the crawl, and presently picked them up. They had gone deeper, and were consequently nearer me.

Now I am on the very verge of the cliff. Two are coming towards me, but they look small. The third one from me is bigger and darker—in fact, the biggest

of the herd. I think it is a good buck, and wish I had a telescope to make sure.[1] Shall I disregard the extra thirty yards? No distance can be harder to judge than one like this, down a sheer cliff. I adjust the sight, and as I do so the big one rises and comes towards the others. In an instant my cap is on the rock, and the barrels rest on it. Now he stops, but only for a few seconds. Now again. This time I do not forget I am almost vertically above him, and sight between his knees. Bang! and he is kicking on the snow!

The herd had not the slightest idea whence the danger threatened, although I stood up, and the dog's yells might have guided them. After racing here and there, four of them moved slowly off up the snow. I was watching my quarry, and when I saw the poor beast stretched out stiff I returned to the dog and attempted to get down to the snow-field. (I may here remark that this shot was heard in camp, and was fired at exactly two o'clock, so that the stalk must have taken about four hours. Such, however, is the fascination of the sport, that I never realised that I had been going for six hours on a slice of bread and butter and a cup of tea at 5.30 A.M.) After descending a shaly piece of cliff some furlong to my right, I came to a place where I thought I could get down; and did so, lifting the dog down, but he absolutely refused to come farther. It certainly was very rotten stuff, though coarse grass grew on it; but a little farther on I found out that to go on I must do the next forty feet *in one*, and that into the crevasse formed by the snow and the base of the cliff. So I clambered back, lifted the dog back again,

[1] This is a beginner's error. The biggest chamois of a herd is never a buck, except, of course, in the rutting season.

and went back to the place whence I had fired. A glance showed the dead chamois, and another lying on some shale fifty yards from it. Of course I did not shoot; I could easily have had another after my first shot had I wished. Again my geography failed me; the cliff is practicable at the angle nearest my camp, but, not knowing this then, I went right back round it again, but struck the snow-slope lower down. It was not a nice place. A ledge of rock, sloping out towards the crevasse it made with the snow, which was a score of feet deep, was so overhung that I could hardly get along it on hands and knees. But, thinking it must be lunch-time, I did go on, pushing gun and stick before me. At the end I could stand upright, so I tossed the dog up the seven-foot bank of frozen snow, cut steps for myself, and followed. A quarter of an hour's cautious descent of the steep snow-slope brought me to rock again, and thence easy slopes and rock enabled me to push on. Half an hour later I was in camp, but it was five o'clock, and my wife was in a pretty state of anxiety. The worst of it was that I had only an hour to eat and rest; and after some tea I started off again, accompanied by my better half and a man to bring down the game. This time we kept to the left, and an hour and a quarter at very creditable lady's pace brought us to the big snow-field, where the dog, who had had the wind and run up, was already barking and tearing at the prostrate quarry.[1] Alas! it was no buck, but next best to it, a very big old yeld doe, with eight-inch horns. Three-quarters of an hour brought her and us back to camp, and made up my day's work to exactly ten hours.

[1] This beast was killed with a 20-bore shot-and-ball gun, of Austrian make. Since then, Messrs Westley-Richards have taken to making such, which they call the "Fauneta."

CHAPTER XII.

"OUR OPENING DAY."

I AM not a musical man, but believe I am right in thinking that there is a once popular melody of which the refrain runs—

"For 'tis our opening day."

On the occasion I propose to tell of it was, if not my, yet their, opening day—in other words, that of one of the half-dozen pack of hounds that share between them the great Forest of Dartmoor and its environs—a nice morning in November, but rather windy. On Exmoor we glide rather into our hunting, and it would be almost difficult to say which is the last day's cub-hunting and the first day's regular hunting with the "Stars of the West," as I still prefer to call them. The reader is aware [1] that Dartmoor was not new ground to me, but it was a part of it far to the west of the district I am now going to write of, on which I had hunted thirteen years previously.

To return to my more recent experience. The day on which we find ourselves once more in pink, even if it be only in a very "provincial" hunting country, must always be a red-letter one in each year's calendar.

[1] See chapter viii.

So I felt on this occasion as I jogged quietly on to the meet. My way lay across the Moor itself, first past a great beetling tor, looking in the distance like a castle, and then through a number of circles of stone, marking the sight of a prehistoric village. Then across a broad and rather boggy valley, past a remote farm, and I arrive at the place where the day's sport will begin. Most of the field — a small one — are already assembled. For these hounds the attendance is a large one; and there may be fifty horsemen and ponymen out, and half a dozen carriages. These latter cannot expect to see much, for the road they are on ends at the farm where we are. There is not much orthodox hunting dress, for the proud Devonian generally hunts in the same costume as that in which he farms, and considers he has made a considerable concession to Diana if he substitutes boots for his everyday leggings. The fair sex is conspicuous by its absence, except in the carriages.

Not much time is cut to waste, but we have a long draw—on the open moor—in the course of which a couple of hours are passed, not unpleasantly, in riding about the country.

At last, as the Master and his hounds are making their way up a deepish valley through which a brook babbles, a hat is held up by one of the field on the right edge of the combe. Hounds are soon on the line, and commence to run with a drive that shows that the heather at least will carry a rare scent to-day. We have to shove our horses along to live with them, but at the end of a mile or so of fairly level going they swing down inside a big wall, cross a road and traverse the very scene of our meet, now silent and abandoned. The fox has crossed, or run

some way up, the water of a brook here; and there is just a hover before hounds strike the line once more, which they do on the near bank of a small tributary stream. Not a furlong on, however, they cross this also, and breast a steep fern-covered bank, some hundreds of feet high, beyond. It is a rocky and awkward place to cross, and there is some crowding and hustling; so altogether hounds have a bit the best of us when our sobbing steeds reach the brow. There is, fortunately, a nice heathery flat beyond, and we can let our mounts sail along in pursuit of hounds. This flat is divided by a high stone wall, which effectually chokes off the pony division, who, indeed, were a good bit tailed off before by the mere pace.

The Irish mare I am riding throws it behind her as a girl does her skipping-rope; and the blood of "Tom Steele" throbs in her veins as she skims the ground beyond. But although this changes, beyond a second wall, to some starvation-looking grass, the pace shows no diminution; and another quarter of an hour of this makes the thing select. The wind, which the fox is quartering, is very strong now on the open moor, and a tall hat is a decided advantage. Presently we come down to one of the nasty crossings which handicap the stranger so in this district. Fortunately a well-mounted native is at hand, and we are soon across with a flounder or two, and away up a sloping "new take" beyond. When the fence of this is behind us, we are out on the Duchy Forest. To our left runs the Teign in a deepish glen, and here hounds suddenly check. We are not sorry to sit still and count noses. There are exactly half a dozen of us.

Hounds swing right-handed to their own cast; and

I do not think much more than a minute has elapsed when they hit it off. Why the fox should have made the short turn he has done, I quite fail to guess; but the fact remains, and hounds are now running down-wind. Headed he certainly was not, for there is not as much as a curlew about to-day. There was some talk of a change afterwards, but there was not any evidence of this.

Be this as it may, we must get along, for hounds, though not running so fast before, are streaking along usefully. One result of the change of route is that we pick up most of the field, or they us, as we go along. We pass again not half a mile from the meet, and finally run to ground on a steep hillside, little, if at all, more than a quarter of a mile from where we originally found our fox.

A member of the field volunteers to go to the nearest farm in quest of digging tools, but I personally do not feel any interest in subterranean operations; and feeling also that so good a fifty minutes is enough for a horse the first day of the season, I turn my face homewards.

I have not left the scene of action half a mile behind me before clamorous "who-whoops" inform me that one more fox at least will, to-day, be added to the score made during cub-hunting.

CHAPTER XIII.

A CHRISTMAS SHOOT IN THE ARDENNES.

I CANNOT begin in the traditional manner by saying that "the morning broke fine and clear," for on the particular Christmas Day I am about to describe it was still pitch dark when I left the old *château* where I had my temporary quarters. My footsteps crunched loudly on the frozen snow as I made my way across the place to the shed-like station, where the steam-tram was waiting. In this, in spite of wraps, I shivered for nearly an hour, till we reached the junction of steam-tramway and railway. We had a considerable time to wait here, and everybody hastened to the combined waiting and refreshment room in quest of hot coffee.

Day was really beginning to break greyly as our train rolled up. A quarter of an hour's run took us to Mersch. This is a fairly important little town, about the biggest business there being that of Messrs Schwartz, a firm of gun-makers pretty well known throughout North-Western Europe; and deservedly.

However, on this occasion my business lay not in the town itself, but at a villa not far from the station —the rendezvous of our shooting party, and the resi-

dence of our host. Here I found a cheery party assembled, and intent upon a variety of "short" drinks suitable to the day. Most of them were dressed in grey or green coats, with their trousers tucked into antigropelos or high boots. Several wore blouses, a dress which does not mark the peasant in Luxemburg. Nearly all carried 16-bore guns, many of them pin-fires. An odd part, to the English eye, of their equipment was muffs. I have long since got used to these, and often longed for one—and the moral courage to wear it. Only those who have to spend long days in the snow, waiting for big game to be driven, can properly appreciate the comfort of such a thing. It hangs from a cord round the neck, and the hands can be at once withdrawn to grasp the gun, which, of course, is slung on the shoulder.

However, I hadn't one, and had to turn out into the cold without it. We made an early start, as is the invariable rule on the Continent. Our first posts were midway in a covert which was a strip on a high bank overhanging the high-road, river, and railway, which here run together. We were told we might fire at anything here, as we should not disturb the main coverts.

"*Treh*," said an old chap, to whom our host had delegated the posting of the guns, pointing to the slot of a couple in the snow just where he had posted me. Roe were a novelty to me then, and I should have been glad of a shot at one, but this time it was not to be, for my gun was clean when the beaters reached me. A gun near me had a roe, and another had bagged a fox sneaking along the very steep side of the cutting above the road.

As the day wore on the cold seemed to be more and more intense. My hands and feet ached with it. In one drive I simply could not stand it, and kicked my heels quietly against an old stump by me. Just at that moment I sighted a fox stealing towards me, but the sound was enough for him, and he at once broke back. He would, however, have been quite safe for me then, for now we had the order to shoot at nothing but the "mighty boar."

At last a halt was made for lunch. Everybody had brought something, and it was a sort of picnic. To the numerous beaters (there must have been sixty) huge loaves and schnaps were served out.

After this we were silently led to our posts for what we were told was the best beat of the day. My stand was behind a big beech at the foot of a steep hill, topped with young fir thicket, a very likely spot, and one, I was told, where the pig was sure to come if there were any in the cover. Hardly had the shouts of the beaters become audible at the far end of the wood, when I heard sticks cracking on the hill-top. I ought to have mentioned that at noon it had suddenly begun to thaw, and the snow was now quite soft, so I could hear no crunching of footsteps. Presently seven pig appeared and cantered down right towards me, increasing their pace as they descended the declivity. Their course led them not ten yards to my left, and, taking steady aim, I plumped a 20-bore bullet into the broad shoulder of the last and biggest—the lord of the harem himself—for Christmas is the rutting season of the wild boar, and they are then at their finest and fattest. Down he went on his head, making the snow fly,

and then staggered up, looking very wicked. My left barrel took him a little forward, and, as it proved afterwards, completely cut his throat. At the moment it reduced his warlike ardour, and turned him down the hill again. Forty yards on, and before I had quite reloaded, he dropped on his side—dead. Almost at this moment a double shot rang out from my neighbour, a gendarmerie officer, and in a minute this was repeated. At the end of the beat I went to him, and found that my shot had turned the "sounder" towards him, and as they passed along behind he had fired both barrels, hitting once, and then again, with an unknown result; but his pig had fallen in the attempt to cross a little rivulet with steep banks, and both here and elsewhere there was plenty of blood.

There was great jubilation when the party assembled. The track of the pigs led to a fir-covered hill. Most of the guns were posted beyond this, the rest, of whom I was one, going with the beaters, in case of a charge from a wounded animal. We had not gone very far up the hill when I almost met and shot a fox. Not two minutes later I heard three shots and much shouting from the firing-line. As I presently learnt, my shot had started the wounded animal, who had gone on to his doom. The only pity was that he was small, a mere infant by mine, which weighed over three hundredweight, and whose tusks hang in the room where I write. In this little beat two more foxes were shot, for, of course, there was no reason against firing now. The rest of the pig were tracked on over the boundary.

Thus, with three roe, two pig, and four foxes, we wended our way to Mersch in triumph, but, strange

to say, in pouring rain. Of the dinner we ate, of the rare Rhine wines our host (a Rhine-side landowner) produced, of the very festive evening which I (alas!) had to be the first to leave to catch the last train, space forbids my telling here. But that Christmas day will live long in my memory.

CHAPTER XIV.

WITH THE N.F.F.H.

THE ideal of the executive of the New Forest Foxhounds seems to be a run outside the Forest; and although no doubt it is a change to *them*, the stranger will probably not appreciate it. The country is poor-scenting, the fences awkward and trappy, and there is plenty of wire. To my mind the best fun with these hounds is obtained in the Forest itself, but on its northern side, where there are more wide, heathery expanses and fewer dreary fir-planted enclosures. Even if there are no fences, falls are not unknown. Falls in the Forest, too, are often no joke. A horse which comes down over a blind rut or a heather-covered molehill very often rolls over his rider. I have a recollection of one or two such "downers" out of which I came luckily, but there is a record of fatal hunting accidents with these hounds which would surprise some of those who sneer at "hunting on the flat."

Let us glance at a couple of runs in the upper Forest which took place during the last season in which I hunted there. These were by no means extraordinary, but they happen to be fresh in my mind. The first took place in November. The meet

was in Bramble Hill Walk, at the house of one of the most regular attendants of the pack. It was rather a large one, but "pink" was conspicuous by its absence. The members of this Hunt Club, a very old one by the way, seem to act on the principle of possessing red coats, and of hunting in anything else, except at "show meets" and in the dirtiest and most uninteresting part of their country — that near the Kennels. To be sure, a tall hat is not exactly the acme of comfort in such a country (is it anywhere?), but, as I have often said in print before, why is the useful and comfortable cap now restricted to hunt officials and servants? As we are not on the "fashionable side" to-day, pink is limited to the Master and his men. That Master, I may remark, holds the position to-day that his grandfather filled a century ago, a fact, in my opinion, not unworthy of notice.[1]

Justice having been done to the hospitality provided for us, a move is made to the big woodland to the westward, and not a very long time elapses before a fox is found. It is a difficult country in which to know exactly what hounds are doing; and before very long we find ourselves with hounds, but not with the fox. A hasty count reveals the fact that no less than four couple are absent, and a report is made that they are gone on to King's Garn Enclosure. Thither the huntsman hurries, but in vain, till he learns they have crossed the open plain to the Bentley Woods. We gallop across to there, but it is not till we reach Anses at one o'clock that he is able to throw the pack in at the head of the still running octette. They at once settle down, dash across the bottom and the

[1] He has retired since the above was written.

muddy brook, and breast the bank beyond. Scent is rather catchy, and the fox probably some way in front, but the dog-pack is able to get along at a good pace through the holly-covered country facing the Powder Works. Down a stony ride we go, and through Amberwood and Pitt's Wood to Ashley. Now we are on open heather, which presently brings us to the Ditchend Brook, here everywhere negotiable. On the bank above it hounds check at the end of quite a nice twenty minutes or so.

There are cattle in front of us, but although the obvious inference is that reynard has run through them, the huntsman makes a couple of side casts before holding them on far enough, and that fact spoils the run. When hounds do hit the line they can only carry it slowly towards Windmill Hill, where the fox has entered cultivated ground. It is only a belt, however, and below the rifle-range we come out on the Forest once more. Skirting Frogham, hounds carry the line down to Ogden's Purlieu, and there we have to abandon pursuit. Whether our fox had got into some drain, or whether he had simply run us out of scent, deponent sayeth not.

The second day I have in my mind was some two and a half months later. The meet was the furthest these hounds have in the Salisbury direction — Hatchet Green — which perhaps accounted for the smallness of the attendance this lovely February morning. Those who undertook the long journey had their reward.

It was towards noon that a fox was found in a plantation known as Millersford; and he promptly went away across Turf Hill by the Butts (which, for the information of those who know not the country, I

may add are really tumuli) to the big wood of Island Thorns. Scent was too good for him to dwell there, and he went on nearly to the Latchmore Brook, swung round, and came back pretty much on the line we had traversed in the run described above, crossing the Ditchend Brook rather higher up, and keeping straight on across the Fordingbridge Road into Godshill Enclosure.

The heather is long on the bank going down into this wood, and there are a lot of self-sown small fir-trees which might hide anything. What they do hide is unknown to me to this day. All I know is, I had a feeling of going into space, followed by the conviction that a pair of incomparable shoulders had saved me from the grief that was overtaking my neighbours. One of them not only kissed Mother Earth, but pulled his bridle right over his horse's head in doing so. Fortunately for him the animal was sensible enough to calmly await the necessary readjustment.

Our fox was a good bit in front of hounds at this time, but they must have got nearer to him in covert, for, after making a circuit of it, they came away at the top corner on excellent terms with him; and for the next four miles and a half they ran almost absolutely straight, and fast enough for anybody.

All we had to do was to sit down and shove our horses along, over Deadman Hill, through the heather and scattered firs to Picket Corner, and past the end of Studley Wood to Crow's Bottom, which most of us crossed by the high-road bridge, thus gaining a bit on the flying pack. As we came up to the cross roads on

Black Bush Plain hounds were bearing away to our right. Fritham Lodge was apparently the fox's point, but he never reached it, for half-way across Longcross Plain they rolled him over fair and square in the open. Whoo-whoop!

CHAPTER XV.

A SOLITAIRE.

I HAD been chamois-shooting nearly a month, and yet could not show a really good buck's head. As is well known to sportsmen, the good bucks never consort with the herds except in the rutting season; and the best of them go quite alone, from which habit they derive the name of *solitaire*. According to their habitat, they are called *gratbock*—in other words, a buck that lives among the cliffs—and *latschenbock*, one which lies in the woods nearest the snow. Old foresters will assure you that this distinction divides two totally different varieties of animal, which, of course, is not the case, though the chamois that haunt the woods (and there are herds that have this habit) are larger and finer than those of the rocks. This, however, proves nothing; nor is the distinction so marked as it is between those of different districts. Greatly superior as is the Swiss *gäms* to the *izzard* of the Pyrenees, it is surpassed in weight and horn measurement by those of Austria, while, again, these must yield to the noble bucks of Montenegro, Herzegovina, and the Caucasus. Like the red deer, the farther east it is found the bigger it is.

On the day of which I am about to speak I decided

to try the neighbourhood of the peak to the north-west, and especially the two valleys below it. It was a very hot morning when I left camp a little before nine. My way lay through thick forest disposed in ridge after ridge, many of them covered with dense young beeches. After less than an hour of this, I struck a wood path at which I had been aiming. This, however, only went a short way in my direction; so presently I left it, crossed another ridge and a large open glade, and struck yet another path. I followed this till I began to feel that my breakfast had been of the slightest, so sat down and discussed my lunch. The post-prandial pipe followed this, and between the puffs I thought I heard a bear roar in the forest in front. Perhaps the wish was father to the thought; at any rate, I saw no sign of him afterwards, nor have I ever heard one on another occasion except at night. Roar, perhaps, is too fine a name to give the sound, which more resembles that of a cross-cut saw, but only continues a second or two, ending like a deep cough.

Ten minutes after lunch I had to leave this path too, and now began a most tedious piece of work. A couple of ridges crossed, I had to face a slope where I could only get along by pulling myself up by the young trees. This surmounted, I found myself confronted by sheer cliff, which I turned by bearing to the right. Fifty feet higher I came to a cave which looked like a bear's *gaura*, and the dog hastened into it. When I reached it I found it thickly carpeted with chamois-droppings. They are fond of such places to sleep in. The old *latschenbock* who probably used it was, however, nowhere about. To make a long story short, it took me over an hour

to do a mile or less, but finally a succession of wild rock and tangled beech thicket, ending in a hands-and-knees climb, brought me exactly where I wanted to get.

The two valleys were in front of me. Likely places for chamois no doubt, but a weary climb on the off-chance. During the earlier stages of the ascent I had several looks into the right-hand valley with the glass, but could see nothing. I thought the other was my best chance, and steered for a *brèche* which should command it. After crossing a snow-slope which had been my landmark, I called the dog in close. At the top of another snow-slope I tied him to my rucksack, and as I was within fifty yards, I left my alpenstock there too. Two or three minutes brought me to the *brêche*. Alas! it was blocked at the far end by a mass of fallen rocks. Well, I hadn't climbed up here to be beaten now, and a look into the valley I was going to have. Slinging my rifle, I tackled the rock to the right on hands and knees; but it was only to find other and harder rocks beyond. My blood was up now, and, thinking to myself that I must find some other way down, I wriggled over a rounded peak without either hand or foothold, with a drop beneath that I wouldn't have looked down for something. Another minute and I was peering into the valley, which I soon saw was utterly devoid of life. The next question was to get back. It could clearly only be done by a climb to the right, where the rocks were more broken. Five minutes did it, and then I had a look into the other valley, not without the reflection that what I had not already seen there must have seen me. Of course there was nothing.

A bad place caused me to keep right out towards the valley here, and just as I was about to turn to descend towards the dog, crash! down went a loose stone, and a big single chamois bounded out of the rocks not fifty yards away. Mr Buxton, in *Short Stalks*, makes the pertinent reflection that man is the noisiest of animals, and as a rule this is true; but he can hardly have been thinking of a chamois. I will cheerfully back myself to make a great deal less noise moving than the most artful old buck living. Except on a snow-field, they invariably seem to select loose stones to tread on; and I have hardly ever been out without my attention being attracted to some of them in this manner.

In the very first days of one's chamois-shooting one takes a running shot like this; misses, of course; and the game goes on for a week. I had already learnt better. During that first mad rush I had dropped on my knee and cocked my gun, and my finger was on the upper leaf of the back-sight in case it should be prolonged. But it was not; on a rock about a hundred yards off he stopped and looked back. He must have stopped longer than usual, too, for I remember that, having cocked my favourite left barrel, I pressed the right trigger and took the weapon down to see what was up. Probably my doubled-up aiming position puzzled him; perhaps it was because he had never seen a man in a kilt before. Very little time, however, was lost before the report rang out and he was down; down, nevertheless, to be up in a second, long before I had reloaded. But I judged that the first downward leap ended in another fall. Directly afterwards he dashed down on to the long snow-slope, but scarcely had he struck

it when his wounded shoulder gave, and he rolled anyhow down the next hundred yards, staining the snow with blood. Then he struck a reef of rock. Whether his impetus or an attempt to rise carried him on I cannot say, but he clattered over it, and shot down a second snow-slope nearly as long as the first, and finally brought up against some more rock. I watched him a minute or two longer, and then *he lowered his head*. Little doubt of finding him now; so I turned back to seek the dog. It did not take me long to get back, and then I made for a point where I imagined it would be possible to get down. But, in the first place, the getting there involved rather a nasty descent, which the dog declined; and, secondly, when I got to my spot I found it quite impossible. Nor could I even get a look at my game without a risky climb. There was nothing for it but to go round the cliff to my right, a proceeding which a grass terrace facilitated. Nothing is more convenient for the chamois-hunter than these same terraces, as long as he keeps away from the edge and does not look down; but one must know them, or else at the end of half an hour one comes to a fault in the rock which involves going back, perhaps to where one started from. It proved so in this case, but the place was not so bad but that I could negotiate it by a flat crawl, pushing my rifle and stick before me, and then all was plain sailing. At this stage I was joined by the dachshund, who had gone back and got round. He soon commenced to draw on the scent of the game, and long before I could get to him I heard him growling and pulling at the body.

As the reader will recollect, I had neither the

time nor opportunity to use the glass, consequently there must always be an element of doubt as to the exact nature of my quarry. Still, the fact that it was a large dark-coloured beast, and, above all, lying alone, went a long way to prove it to be a good buck. One last scramble down a clitter of rocks (as they say in Dartmoor), and, crossing the snow, I was beside the animal, which had scarcely, if at all, moved from where I had last seen it.

My doubts were soon at rest: it was a *solitaire*. The horns were not very fine (I easily beat them afterwards), but they were well ringed at the base, and by the teeth, one of which was missing, I judged him to be seven or eight years old, if not more. Although the chamois is said to attain the age of a quarter of a century or even more, it is very rarely that the horns exceed ten inches. One wonderful pair I saw in this country was not only longer than this, but the span between the curves was so great, and the outward curve of the tips such, that they looked more like those of a wild goat. Only two or three Herzegovinian sportsmen can show horns over ten inches, and of these I am fortunate enough to count myself one.

The bullet was nicely placed in the shoulder, which was shattered. It was a little high (due to the 5500 feet elevation, perhaps), but the frothed blood at the mouth showed that the lungs were penetrated. The meat of old chamois, especially bucks, is worthless. I should have liked, however, to have taken home the skin, though the fur in early autumn is of little value. Time, however, did not allow of the lengthy process of skinning, so all I could do

was to transfer the head and feet to my rucksack. Before I left the dead beast I ripped up the skin so as to enable the lammergeier to get to work more quickly. Enormous as this bird is, he has little strength in beak or claws; and even the smaller vultures, though better provided in these respects, will often sit a day or two by a fresh carcase till incipient putrefaction makes their task more easy.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE CHASE OF THE WILD DEER IN ENGLAND.

THE original stock of wild deer in Southern England, which is only represented in most districts by the contents of some gentlemen's private parks, as is that of the wild cattle at Chillingham and elsewhere, exists in its pristine state in two places only. On the hills of Exmoor and the Quantocks, and in the surrounding country, the red-deer abound. In the New Forest there is a great head of fallow-deer, and also a few red- and roe-deer, which last are both of modern origin.

Although there are some dozen packs of staghounds whose meets are advertised each week in the papers, only two of these concern themselves with the wild deer.[1] These are the Devon and Somerset Staghounds, which hunt the red-deer, and the New Forest Deerhounds, whose principal quarry is the fallow-deer, though they kill one or two red-deer every year. The remaining packs hunt a stag or hind, which is turned out for the purpose, and which generally returns home in its cart before

[1] Two Lancashire packs hunt "wild deer," but these are in both cases feral. The Devon and Somerset lend some of their country to subsidiary packs nowadays.

night. Need I explain that the male, female, and young of the red-deer are correctly described as stags, hinds, and calves; while those of the fallow-deer are known as bucks, does, and fawns respectively.

Those sportsmen, then, who wish to enjoy the chase of the English wild deer can do so only by resorting to one of the two districts I have referred to. Having spent a season in each district, I propose to give a short account of the sport in both. The Devon and Somerset being the better known and more fashionable, I will commence with that pack.

I. THE DEVON AND SOMERSET STAG-HOUNDS.

These hounds are a pack of great antiquity, but a history of them would be beyond the scope of the present chapter, so I will only refer those interested in the matter to the many books on the subject—such as Collyn's *Chase of the Red Deer*, Jefferies' *Red Deer Land*, and others. Early in Queen Victoria's reign the head of deer had got very small, but by careful preservation it has now reached such numbers that a hundred head and more can be killed in a season without permanently affecting the total. The usual number killed is from five-and-twenty to thirty stags between August and October, and twice that number of hinds between November and March. It will thus be seen that the sport is not likely to suffer from want of deer. There is, however, another cause which is likely in time to

militate against hunting—and that is, that the deer are gradually migrating away from their original haunts. The *ne plus ultra* of stag-hunting is a gallop across the moor, and in the old days when all the deer used the coverts adjoining the Royal Forest of Exmoor it could generally be relied upon. The case is far different now. The Forest is no longer Royal: sheep and shepherds' dogs, and, more objectionable than all, tourists, disturb its repose. The tendency of the deer, then, is to take to the great woodlands far from the Forest, where they are not only undisturbed, but can easily reach their staple food, the farmers' crops, among which they make such havoc. I may here say that this is promptly compensated by the Hunt, whose "Deer Damage Fund" pays some hundreds of pounds annually. Every year now deer are reported farther and farther away from the moor, in districts where they have been unknown during the present century at at any rate. It is easy to foresee that "Red Deer Land" will ere long extend from the Severn Sea to Tiverton in the south, and from Barnstaple in the west to Bridgewater in the east.[1] Already deer have been found by the hounds within a few miles of Barnstaple, and taken east of the river Parret. Some seasons back a stag ran from Haddon Woods nearly to Tiverton. The huntsman, meeting a yokel, asked him if he had seen the stag.

"Nay, I hannot," was the answer; "but I zaw a jackass wi' a hurdle on his head down by the river."

He had never seen a stag in his life before; but

[1] This forecast, written a good many years ago, has been fulfilled.

if he is still living, he has probably seen a good many jackasses with hurdles on their heads since.

Unfortunately, the country to which the deer are spreading does not lend itself to enjoyable hunting. To begin with, it is cultivated, and therefore closed to horsemen in the stag-hunting season, as the crops are not yet harvested. Even in winter it is unrideable. This is not because the fences are high banks, for such are habitually negotiated in Wales, Cornwall, and parts of Ireland. Here, unfortunately, the banks are crowned with high stiff beech hedges through which no horse can get. The deer and hounds easily surmount these. No one who is not familiar with the "deer racks" of Devon would believe through what a small space a royal stag will slip. Meanwhile the field are reduced to hopeless macadamising, and pounding along roads which generally follow the bottoms of deep valleys is a very different matter to a gallop over the breezy moor.

This being, then, the habitat of the deer, let us turn to the means by which they are brought to bay, and firstly to the hounds. These are thoroughbred fox-hounds, drafted from all the packs in England.[1] The only reason for which they have been drafted is that they are too large for any English pack of fox-hounds. They are, in fact, the giants of the fox-hound world. In addition to their great size, they possess the peculiarity of not having their ears rounded or cut short, according to the usual fashion. This gives the head a nobler appearance. As is well known, all hounds take readily to

[1] Of late years some have been bred at Exford.

the scent of the deer, which is very strong. I have frequently seen hounds run hard on a scent which actual eye-witnesses could prove to be an hour old. It is not one of the least of the many mysteries of scent that what the old writers call "beasts of sweet chace," such as the deer and the hare, should leave so much stronger a scent than the "beasts of stinking chace," such as the fox and the badger.

Turning to the huntsman, we find that until 1892 the horn had been for many years in the hands of Arthur Heal, who certainly knows more of the wiles of the hunted deer and of the method of hunting it than any man living. Even at three-score years and ten he was in his own country

"A rum 'un to follow, a bad 'un to beat."

But the fatigues of the long days, which often extend to twelve hours in the saddle, proved too much for him at last, and he resigned the horn into the hands of his whip, Anthony Huxtable, no unworthy successor.

The Mastership, which had been held for so many years by Mr Bisset — whose personal exertions, seconded by those of "Parson Jack Russell" and Mr Froude Bellew, did so much for the Devon and Somerset Stag Hunt—passed at his death to Lord Ebrington, and afterwards to Charles H. Basset, of Watermouth Castle, a Devonshire man born and bred, and formerly an officer in the Royal Navy. Mr Basset having had the misfortune to lose his hand, his accession to office brought about the singular coincidence that both the Masters of Hounds

hunting the wild deer in England were one-handed men.[1]

The last official of the Hunt whom it will be necessary to notice, but certainly not the least important in providing sport for the field, is "harbourer." In summer or winter, rain or shine, it is his duty to be on the ground before daylight. Perched immovably in some convenient tree, he watches the deer returning from their feeding-ground in the dusk of the dawn. Having satisfied himself as to the presence of such a deer as is required for hunting, stag or hind, according to the season, he proceeds to follow its "slot" to the wood where it has taken up its abode for the day. Having ascertained that the tracks lead into a certain covert, his next step is to go round the same in order to make sure that the deer has not emerged on the other side. If the wood be a very large one, it will even be necessary for him to cross it, so that when the huntsman comes to play his part, he can show him where to throw his "tufters" into covert so as to come at once upon the deer. I was once an eye-witness to an amusing scene between the huntsman and the harbourer. The latter—not Miles—had reported a warrantable deer in a certain covert, but the "tufters" had quite failed to move him. At last the huntsman expressed a doubt as to the accuracy of the harbouring.

"If your hounds can't find him, I can," was the ready answer, and taking a few steps into the woodland the harbourer cracked his whip. At the sound, and almost under his feet, a splendid "royal" sprang up and crashed through the thicket. I ought per-

[1] Both have resigned since these words were written, and various Masters have followed one another in both countries.

haps to explain that the term "tufters" is applied to the three or four hounds with which the coverts are generally drawn, the remainder of the pack being shut up in some convenient barn. The reason of this is that the covert probably contains all sorts of deer, stags, hinds, and calves. The tufters are stopped again and again, till the required animal is seen to go away, when they are stopped for the last time, and the whole pack is fetched and laid upon the line. Of course, when there is known to be only one deer in a covert this precaution is unnecessary, and the covert is drawn with the pack as in fox-hunting.

The Hunt uniform is scarlet, with a silver button bearing a stag's head and the motto, "Prosperity to Stag-hunting." It is the only Hunt which has a crest and motto of its own.

Having now described the Hunt at some length, let me dip into my old diaries for a couple of representative runs.

A MOORLAND RUN.

The meet for Wednesday, the 3rd of October 18—, was fixed for Bray Ford, a point almost equidistant from London and Dulverton, and from Barnstaple and Porlock. The legitimate stag-hunting season had nearly reached its close, and the vast fields (sometimes five hundred horsemen) we had seen in August and September had dwindled considerably, though probably over a hundred were present at the meet.

Before I had changed my hack for my hunter, the harbourer approached me and informed me he had harboured a single stag in Cold Hill Wood, and that the Master intended to try and force him to the Moor.

Looking up to the height known as Whitefield Down, whose steep slopes towered some hundreds of feet above us, my plans were at once made. I ordered my groom to walk my horse quietly to the top at once, and if the hounds ran that way to look out for me. If, on the other hand, the deer took a line back into the big woodlands, he was to follow and join me as soon as he could.

Soon after eleven the Master gave the signal to draw with the pack, there being only one deer in the covert, and tufters being consequently unnecessary. All went as had been hoped; the stag, who was, however, very nearly "blanched"[1] by some of the field, succeeded in making Whitefield Down. Up this precipitous steep the field had to follow, and it was soon "bellows to mend" with some of the horses. Confident in finding a fresh horse at the top, I bucketed my unfortunate hack somewhat unmercifully up the steep. My confidence was not ill bestowed, for there was George with the mare.

Here, I think, I should mention the mount who carried me so well that day. "Contraband," by "Free Trade," her dam by "The Brigand," was a blood bay, standing sixteen hands two and a half. She was at the time only four years off, but had a much lighter weight to carry than her frame would warrant in future years. This, then, was the mare who was waiting for me at the top of the hill. I lost no time in changing horses, for hounds were running hard. For the next mile or so the moor was very bad going, being both boggy and trappy. Soon we cross the Barle, and come out on the high land known as

[1] "Blanched" in stag-hunting corresponds to "headed" in fox-hunting, and means that the stag is turned from his point by man.

Exe Head. Here hounds are racing half a mile ahead of us, beyond the dreaded bog known as the "Black Pits." Some few risk it; I with most of the others turn along under a fence, and find the going quite bad enough. At last we come out on a steep hillside, and on to the Brendon Road. This gives our horses a chance to get their wind, and at Brendon Two Gates we get on to the moor again. Mr Karslake and two other knowing ones have second horses waiting here, which some envy, but my young one is going strong and well, and now for the first time I can let her go and extend her tremendous stride through the heather.

As I gallop down Badgeworthy Lees I have time to look round. For miles behind the moor I have crossed is dotted with horsemen—and footmen too, by Jove! for here is a riderless horse galloping close behind me. There, a mile in front, is a grey patch fleeting across the moor—the pack. I push on, and in a minute or two am galloping down the grassy turf of the Doone Valley. Now Badgeworthy Water is forded, and I gallop up the long slope of Mr Snow's Deer Park (so called). Here I jump my second and last bank, the first having been coming up to Yard Down. There is very little jumping on the moor, though there are plenty of falls.

Directly after I made a bad mistake. An excited shepherd holloaing led me to think I had overridden the line, and that the stag had turned short back to Badgeworthy Water. I turned round, and actually rode nearly back there till, meeting a couple of tailed-off hounds holding on the line, I saw I was mistaken, and once more retraced my way to the Exford Road. The rest of the leading division had now gained con-

siderably on me, but I knew the stag's point must be Horner, and sent my mare along fast through the heather to Lee Hill, whence I descended rapidly into the valley, and followed the brook towards the sea. Yes, there, just above Horner Green, is the stag at bay, his back against some rails. Before him lies a hound on the stones, unhurt fortunately, but another licks a nasty wound, while the rest bay furiously. The stag is roped at once by Anthony, and knifed by Arthur. He was a fine, rather dark stag, with a splendid head of twelve points. This was the finest moorland run for fourteen years, and I doubt if there has been such another since. Out of the large field, there were thirteen or fourteen in at the death.

I cannot conclude better than with an extract from the account written at the time for *Horse and Hound* by Arthur Heal's son, and consequently inspired by the huntsman. He says: "A splendid run, entirely in the open, and one of the best for many a year—in fact there could be no better. The distance is full twenty miles, and the time from find to finish one hour and fifty minutes, without the slightest check. Among those who went well with the leading division throughout were Mr Basset, the Duchess of Hamilton, Mrs T. Fitzwilliam, Miss Kinglake, Miss Hurst (riding a mare of Snaffle's [1]), Captain Curzon, the Hon. C. Bampfylde, Mr Karslake, Q.C., Mr J. Budd, Mr A. Hamilton ("Cinqfoil," of *The Field*, who wrote a capital account of the run), —— ("Snaffle" [1]), Messrs Coleridge, Rocke (two), Passmore, and Slader."

So ended the great moorland gallop. Before we

[1] My notes and remarks—Snaffle.

moved away homewards, some score more horsemen had turned up, making the total up to thirty-five according to "Cinqfoil," or thirty-three according to "Dunkery" in *Land and Water*, who pithily concludes, "All else were absolutely out of it."

A GALLOP OVER THE GRASS.

This run occurred after the end of the legitimate stag-hunting season, the Master having granted the longed-for favour of "a few by-days." The date was Tuesday, October 16, and consequently a fortnight all but a day after the big run I described last.

Properly speaking I ought to have begun with a prologue, and told the story of the run of September the 24th. Suffice it to say that on that day the meet being at Haddon, hounds were laid at 4 P.M. on to the line of a one-horned stag, who beat them finally in thick mist and gathering darkness at a place called Steert.

On the day of which I speak, then, the meet was again at Haddon. The harbourer reported a stag to be lying in Huscombe Wood, close to his own cottage. The tufters found him at once, and as he broke, we of the field, waiting on the opposite hill, could plainly see he was a *one-horned stag*. To put the matter beyond all doubt, he took us field for field, the same line as he had done three weeks before. But I anticipate.

The Master came for the pack, the tufters having been duly stopped at a farm called Greenslade. The field clattered after the pack down the rough road, and at twelve o'clock they were laid on. They com-

menced to run at once at a truly terrific pace, and this time it was all sound going, grass fields and big banks, and plenty of handy gates for those who preferred them.

We rose the slopes of Blagdon Hill, and emerged on some common-like land through which the West Somerset Mineral Railway runs. This we crossed near Gupworthy, and on to a little heather at Lype Hill, hounds driving as hard as ever. Here Arthur gets his second horse, and leads the way for a while, hounds making as if for Dunkery Beacon, which now towers above us, and on whose eastern slope we exchange grass for heather again.

The change of ground makes no difference in the pace, and hounds run as fast as ever. Through the Parsonage Wood they crash, and just below Horner Mill they set up the stag, at exactly a quarter-past one. The run up to here was nearly fourteen miles as the crow flies, so that the pace was decidedly better than the previous run, but the time was less in all. But our panting horses were not to have their well-earned rest yet. The stag had turned to bay on the side of a steep cutting where no one could have got at him. After facing the pack for a few minutes he broke his bay, making as if for Leigh Hill, but he was unequal to the effort required, and turned again seaward. Past Holnicote he went, and a furlong from the shore he again faced his foes in an angle between two stone walls. His one horn completely kept the pack off, and, strange to say, his boldest adversary was a small cottager's cur which had joined in the chase. Probably he did not know his danger as the great hounds did.

Presently he scrambled over the wall at his back,

and running over the stony beach, plunged into the Severn Sea, followed by the pack, and disappeared from our sight round the great cliffs of Bossington Point. Time, one hour and forty-five minutes from the moment hounds were laid on.

What was to be done? No boat was available, but our Master was a man of resource. A coasting schooner was beating down Channel on the ebb-tide, and at her next tack she was hailed.

"Will you lend us a boat to take our stag?"

"Your what?"

"The deer. Send your boat ashore and you shall have a sovereign."

This was plain enough to anybody, and smartly the craft was hove to and her boat lowered. Two hands rowed ashore to us, and Anthony was put on board and started in pursuit of the stag. Some time elapsed before the boat returned with the stag in tow, and landing him just where he had left the shore, he soon yielded up his life. The boatmen, who said they had never seen a stag before, were much interested, but had to hasten on board their craft not to lose the tide.

The stag proved to be a very old one with hardly any points on his perfect horn. In other words, he was what is called a "bater," because his antlers, having attained in previous years their perfection of twelve or more points, have commenced to abate some of their number. The broken horn was only about eight inches long, and attached to it was another piece of about the same length swinging loose, and attached only by skin. This horn had only one point, the "brow."

Meanwhile the ladies, who had gone so well in

the previous run, and who were living at Porlock, which is close by, had heard the hounds and hurried out to see. They hospitably invited us to their house. Both then and afterwards the discussion on the question, "Which was the finer run?" raged hotly; and even I, who played my part in both, find it hard to answer. One thing is clear, that since that season neither has been equalled, far less surpassed.

"Prosperity to stag-hunting!"

II. THE NEW FOREST DEER-HOUNDS.

Ever since I had had a season on Exmoor I had conceived a strong desire to give the New Forest pack a turn, but it was not till a couple of years later that I was able to gratify this, and sending three horses down to Lyndhurst, I followed them myself a day or two after the New Year.

The season, as it proved, was not the best I could have chosen for deer-hunting, for in those days February was a close month, and in March I had to sail for India. However, I learned something of the sport, of the pack, and of the country, which I may here condense.

At the time of which I write the Mastership of these hounds was in the hands of Mr Lovell, who had started the pack in 1858. Things were done in a more or less rough-and-ready way, the green coat being worn only by the huntsman, whose nominal assistant was a lad in leggings. Practically, much help was given by the Misses Lovell,

and by that sheet-anchor of deer-hunting, Mr Gerald Lascelles.

The New Forest, from a deer-hunting point of view, may be described as an expanse of woodland, moor, and marsh, some nine miles in diameter, and dotted with enclosures "within fence for growth of timber," and, much more rarely, with occasional hamlets and tracts of cultivated land. The railway bounds the eastward range of the deer, and they rarely go as far west as the Christchurch Avon.

Three kinds of deer inhabit this area—the native British red-deer and roe-deer, and the introduced fallow-deer, if it is not pedantic to speak so of an animal which arrived in our country before the Christian religion. The roe-deer is not now often hunted in England, though during the last century they afforded great sport in Dorsetshire; and though to kill a stag is generally the great ambition of masters of the New Forest pack, there are so few red-deer in the district that it is an ambition but rarely realised. Fallow-deer are the usual objects of chase here, for which reason this pack, alone in England, are known as "deer-hounds." As a matter of breed they are simply fox-hounds, as indeed all English so-called "stag-hounds" are.

In its present form the hunt has a history of some sixty years, during the earlier half of which it was a scratch affair. As a rule the deer-hounds hunt one day a-week in the upper and one in the lower part of their country. The latter has the advantage, in my opinion, of carrying a better scent, but it consists mostly of woodland, intersected with deep, holding rides; whereas in the upper country the enclosures generally lie farther apart, and are divided by wide

open heaths, which afford good galloping. With the exception of one or two adjoining and wooded estates, the deer-hunting country is all the property of the Crown.

During this my first season with the pack I witnessed some doe-hunting of the ordinary sort, the best run I saw being one of two hours and fifty minutes.

Mr Lovell resigned the Mastership in 1893, and was followed by four Masters in succession, their total reigns extending over fifteen years. It was during the period of the fourth of these that I was able to have another season with these hounds. I may add that his resignation occurred in the fiftieth year of the Hunt, and that since then Mr George Thursby has been at the head of affairs.

My second season was a complete one, beginning in August and ending in May. I had altogether seventy-seven days hunting, and saw sixty deer killed. The August buck-hunting is not of great interest, particularly to the riding man, but cannot be altogether passed over in silence.

Let me describe an actual day's sport. The meet is in the lower country, some five miles from the kennels, and on the Bournemouth road. The Forest is in its full beauty in August. Only where they happen to grow next the blue-green firs can one notice that there is already a shade of brown in the foliage of the oaks. The heather is in full bloom, and all open spaces that are not deep in green bracken are purple with the flowers of both varieties. Through these, and through the woodlands, winds the yellow road, and hardly have we cleared the outlying houses of the Forest capital, Lyndhurst, than we are aware

of a movement towards the meeting-place. First it is a string of bicyclists of both sexes, almost all equipped with cameras; then one or two grooms going quietly on with their masters' steeds; and then dozens of vehicles, from the humble fly to the lordly landau. As we get nearer the scene of action a couple of green-coated hunt-servants with second horses trot past; and lastly comes the pack, clustering round the huntsman—a sight which compels us, too, to hasten our pace.

The rendezvous is at a little bridge, or rather culvert, under which a forest streamlet known as the Obere Water hurries to join the Lymington river. When we reach it we find the hounds in an open glade on the roadside, whilst master and huntsman are in earnest consultation with the forest keepers of the "Walk," who are here to report as to the deer in the immediate vicinity. Their information is to the effect that two "warrantable" bucks are using the enclosure immediately to the eastward. With the exception of three couples, hounds are now chained by them in bunches, each taken charge of by a pedestrian. The others, technically known, as I have before said, as "tufters," are then called away by the huntsman, who, with the Master, trots away to draw for the deer.

Some of the field elect to follow these preliminary proceedings, whilst others, of whom we form a part, follow the pack up the road half a mile or so to the place at which they have been ordered to wait. Here we dismount, and kill the time with conversation or tobacco. With us are, perforce, all the carriages and bicycles, who can hardly expect to see much of the fun in such a close country. At intervals we hear something of the proceedings. It may be

the note of a hound or a horn, or the loud-mouthed shoutings and whip-crackings which prove that the tufters are being stopped from the pursuit of an animal of the wrong sex. At last comes a message from the Master to keep the road clear, as the bucks are working in that direction. This is shortly followed by a loud holloa—a buck has at last been separated. Almost before we are mounted the huntsman comes for the pack, and a quarter of an hour before midday they are laid on the line. The deer has apparently lain down, for almost immediately he lobs across the ride, his spreading antlers laid back upon his flanks. For some time he dodges and doubles across this enclosure—Vinney Ridge by name—and then makes for an ornamental plantation that adjoins it. A pause follows, and then we hear hounds running back, and make towards them. Not long afterwards there bounds into the ride we are in—the wrong buck. We are in duty bound to assist the whipper-in to secure the hounds which are following this deer; and then we hasten off at hot pace in the direction where we last heard the others. We have a smart gallop before we find them driving across an open plain divided into two by a boggy brook which brings one sportsman at least to grief. On they go, over the Lymington river and through another enclosure called Hursthill, and thence run into the grounds of a quaint, old-fashioned-looking, but modern, country house. The difficulties here produce a check, but a holloa comes from the Brockenhurst road just beyond. Parallel to the pack, we clatter down Clay Hill and turn into the greenwood again and race up a hill—Park Hill. Hounds have been running nearly an hour now, and our horses

where not brown with mud are white with foam. Our fat buck, too, is beginning to run short. Into another enclosure he goes—Park Hill this time, but his relentless pursuers force him out, and one view-holloa follows another in quick succession. Over into Denny Lodge Enclosure he makes his way, the pack close at his heels. A few more short turns, one of which brings him right through a line of panting horses, some of which would probably have suffered had the quarry been the fiercer-natured stag. This is almost the last effort, and the "Whoo-whoop!" rings through the oaks. We jump off our lathering steeds and compare watches. One hour and a quarter. A good gallop for a big buck to give. From the point where the hounds were laid on to the check is some three miles in a straight line, the remainder somewhat less. But deer run by no means straight, and probably a dozen good miles have been covered.

The pack move off, the intention of those with it being to find certain missing hounds and hunt-officials, and ultimately, probably, to go and try for the other buck. But a feeling that our horses have done enough for a close August day impels us to turn their heads homewards.

October being a close month, the doe-hunting commences in November, and merges almost imperceptibly into the spring buck-hunting season. On the whole the season was productive of sport, the best day of it being a six-mile point, made on the shortest day of the year, from Anses to Markway Bridge, in an hour and a quarter. Does rarely make so good a point as this, and this one saved her life by dividing the pack amongst fresh deer.

The March buck-hunting also provided sport, one run—a five-mile point—ending with the death of the finest Forest bucks I have ever seen; whilst another was noteworthy from the fact that the deer left the Forest, and was killed near the hamlet of Blissford. But April was to provide better things. On the 9th of that month the deer ran a most unusual and extraordinary line. The pack was laid on in the Ornamental Drive, Rhinefields, and after a check among fresh deer at Knightwood, went on by Jones' Cottage, and nearly to Parkhill House. From this place the deer (it was a pricket, by the way) had turned left-handed, and went through a string of coverts to the railway line just below Beaulieu Road Station, where he lay down in the bog. When hounds hunted up to him he jumped up in view, and went down along the railway fence, deer and hounds swimming the Bishop's Ditch. A right-handed turn towards Woodfidley brought the end just as he reached the first trees.

A week later we were treated to another great run. A good buck was found and pushed out of Broadley, and made a three-mile point to Rhinefields Lodge. Hence he bent right-handed, going two miles more to Whitley Wood. After a short check here he ran to Gritnam Wood, where hounds momentarily checked again, and then made another two and a half mile point to Millyford Bridge. At the well-known deer-crossing at Millyford hounds were stopped, having covered quite nine miles in fifty minutes. It appears that some does had been seen in front of them, but nevertheless hounds should have been trusted, for after much fruitless casting a holloa announced the fact that the buck was lying

dead-beat at the top of Puckpits, and there he was killed. Nor was this good day at an end now, for a second buck was soon found, and killed after half an hour's run.

Since the death of the "May deer," which came a fortnight later, I have not revisited the Forest, in which I, nevertheless, always take an interest; and none the less that George Thursby, whom I remember as a huntsman of harriers there, and who for a time also hunted fox there, continues to show good sport with his pack.

He has been extraordinarily successful with red-deer of late, having had two quite phenomenal runs in 1912, the spring one with a stag, and the autumn one with a hind. It is a *dictum* of Mr Gerald Lascelles that the Forest is unsuited to red-deer hunting; and certainly in both the above cases the field were quite beaten off; but they were very fine runs.

CHAPTER XVII.

IN EPIRUS.

"ARE you game for a couple of days at the pig, next week?" asked H. of me one afternoon, on which we happened to meet on one of the muddy Corfiote country roads.

"Why, certainly," was my reply (I am afraid this quotation will be lost on the rising generation); and accordingly we made preparation. There had been considerable difficulty that winter about shooting permits for Albania, but this was then mostly at an end. The weather—incessantly wet since the middle of November—was as favourable as it could be, as the marshes were temporarily turned into ponds, and the pig consequently driven to the foot-hills.

All arrangements having been made, the *Olive*, one of the smartest of the well-known Woodley fleet of yachts, cast off her moorings about three o'clock one Wednesday afternoon, having for passengers H., my wife, and myself. Wind there was little or none, and dinner was over long ere the anchor was let go in the little roadstead of Tre Scoglie—so called for no very clear reason, because there are really *five* islets.

Next morning H. and I, with Lorenzo, the skipper of the yacht, who was also to captain the beaters,

his two spaniels, and my little dachshund "Vixen" (of whom my readers may have read something in my previous books), landed in the dinghy about nine. I may here say that although the little bitch had only had one evening to make the acquaintance of Lorenzo, she readily went with him when told, and hunted all day with his spaniels and the huge Albanian dogs, till at night she could hardly crawl, and her ears were completely hairless. Nevertheless she was just as ready and keen on the third day. She died in 1913, aged 17.

Half an hour's walk brought us to our stands, which were pointed out by old Kollio, the Albanian so well known to all who have ever shot here. The beat was a short one. For a moment we had hopes, but the shouts which reached my ear were only referable to the successful efforts of a roe to break back, and all that passed the guns was a fox, which H., hoping for better things, very properly spared. We now started back towards our landing-place, and in a bottom Kollio posted us again, H. in a thicket, and myself in an open glade beyond.

By this time I had seen a good deal of the ground, and practically made up my mind we were on a wild-goose chase. It was not without some experience of the matter that I thus expressed myself in a previous work: "The boar loves quiet, and is assuredly not to be found where flocks and herds wander." But true as this is of the boar of Northern Europe, local conditions on the Albanian coast have quite altered the habits of the animal. Throughout this day we were surrounded by live stock; the infernal din of their bells spoilt all my pleasure in most of the beats, and yet seven or eight pig were forthcoming. But

I anticipate. This time, on finding my glade filling up gradually with horses, donkeys, sheep, a man talking with a boy, and an enormous white dog of sinister appearance, I gave it up, and, as the beaters were still out of ear-shot, I went back to Kollio, who was sitting by H., and who now posted me in a glade—not very open—on the other flank of H.'s position. The beat was long, and appeared to be somewhat stragglingly performed. First a spaniel came to me, but I stoned him back into covert. Then came a hare, and then a roe. I walked quietly to the left when this last animal appeared, but could not get a clear shot, and withheld my fire. In this I was right, for very soon afterwards the shouts of a shepherd on the hill drew my attention to a stumpy black body going best pace outside the upper edge of the cover. I ran on to meet the boar, but unfortunately I did not know the ground. All I saw was a black shadow fleeting through the thorn bushes when five yards further would have given me a certain shot, as I found out when too late. By this time it was pouring, and I was glad to get into my cape and make my way back to H.'s stand to lunch. Here I heard that several pig had broken back, and also that the beaters had come on a fine dead boar, shot about a fortnight before, of which they produced the tusks.

Our first after-lunch beat resulted in a comical error. I quite misconceived the position, for, being sent down a narrow ride between two patches of thick covert, I naturally faced to windward, and, in fact, was smoking, when suddenly the beaters opened behind me, and at once their yells and the notes of the dogs announced "pig on foot." Of course they (there were two) broke back, and I am convinced that

this was only one of many occasions on which Kollio's dispositions failed from his neglecting to consider the wind. However, we were both posted in a hollow road so narrow that it would have taken a first-class rifle-shot to have made sure of a pig. For the rest of the short beat woodcock kept flapping over my head in a lazy and tempting manner, but elsewhere we did not see a great many of these birds during our trip.

After lunch we had to walk some little way to our positions, which, being on an open hillside, would have been excellent for shooting, but, unfortunately, the beat was entirely blank. After this we did little more than turn round whilst they beat a belt of thick covert running down to a lakelet with marshy banks. Unfortunately this side of the hill was much more covered with thorn bushes. The beat was approaching its end when I caught sight of a boar passing some hundred yards below me. I could see little more than the withers, but there was little chance of a better view, so I took a snap-shot, the only effect of which was, as the tracks subsequently proved, to increase the pace of the animal. The report of my weapon (I was using a 20-bore shot-and-ball gun) was followed by ear-piercing shrieks from three girls gathering brushwood three hundred yards away. As one of them was on the ground I was naturally much alarmed; but when they had scored off me sufficiently they picked up their bundles and walked off.

Shooting in this district—with ball at any rate—requires great care. I subsequently discovered three horses in the direct line in which I had fired, and which had previously been hidden from me by a dip in the ground. The next, a short beat and blank of all but woodcock, brought us back to our landing-

place, and then we proceeded to beat the covert that ran down to our posts in the first after-lunch beat. Dogs and beaters were soon in full cry, and by the sound of the former the pig must have crossed within fifty yards of me.

Directly afterwards I heard a shot from H.'s post. The beaters were silent, and imagining the beat to be over, I walked down to the sea. Not a minute after "Vixen" and the spaniels opened behind me, and as I turned towards the covert a roebuck broke. Forgetting that my right barrel was loaded with slugs (in which I have at any time little faith), and consequently useless at a range of nearly a hundred yards, I fired it. The deer changed his course, giving me a broadside shot for the bullet, and then disappeared in the thicket. Presently I caught sight of him going up the wooded hillock, and detecting an abnormal movement I ran after him, and found him lying dead. Hardly had I reached him when "Vixen," following the line, also arrived, and seized him by the throat. The bullet was nicely placed—just behind the shoulder—a creditable performance for the little gun. H. now joined me. Hearing the dogs, he had run to the place where I had been originally posted in the second beat. The pig had crossed the open glade, but a hundred and fifty yards beyond him, and consequently too far off for his smooth-bore. This ended our first day.

Next morning we started for a long pull in the gig through cold driving rain, and over a rough sea. H., who was a first-rate swimmer, kept on explaining what he would do if we were to be swamped. As I am better on land than in the water, I felt this conversation the reverse of cheering, especially as I

could not light a pipe. Fortunately, we landed safely below the Monastery, which gives the point we had steered for its name, and climbed the hill to the shore of the great Butrinto Lake. The day was too thick for the scenery to be at its best, but every now and then we caught sight of snow-clad mountains and of masonry-topped hills, but which of these latter corresponded to the "lofty Buthroton" of Homer I cannot venture to say. The first beat only produced a roe, which broke up over the ridge unshot at, passing right through a line of wood-carrying women. The lake was covered with duck, which kept at a safe distance from shore. Good sport is to be had with them at the outflow of the lake at times, especially in the form of "flighting" at sunset.

For the next beat we crossed over to the sea, and in doing so came on the same roe. I snapped at him, but fruitlessly, at a hundred and fifty yards' range, and nothing but this roe was found in this beat, when, needless to say, he broke back. All that passed me was a wild cat, at which, of course, I did not fire. Then followed a small and unpromising beat, which was quite blank. During this, our party was reinforced by a sulky-looking *zaptieh*, who had not even a good-day for us Christian dogs, whose two francs he would, however, have pocketed at the end of the day, had we not got rid of him by a stratagem. To reach our places for the fourth beat we had a long and rough walk along the lake, but not long after we were posted shots were heard, and we were requested to move towards the sea, an enormous *solitaire* having been seen in that direction. He had moved off, however, and we ate a somewhat depressed lunch. Next time we had another long walk along the rocky shore,

and then across to the lake again. In this beat there were nine pig, but all broke back, and we went to our floating home disgusted.

Saturday was as unpromising a day as any other. E. accompanied us, and also "Vixen." We landed at the nearest point to the yacht, and walked off to the lake again, the first beat being a continuation, so to say, of the last of the night before. A fine fox came down to the rocks near me and I let him go, but my forbearance was not rewarded. The only pig, as usual, broke back. Most of this beat took place in driving hail, and the cold was bitter. The next, up to the ridge, was quite blank—all I had to look at being a swan flying over the lake. The third was identical with the fourth on the first day. Hardly were we posted than two jackals passed me. I was bloodthirsty by this time, so fired, but missed at short range, and, rightly or wrongly, put it on the slugs, seven of which go to the charge, and consequently cannot be expected to make much of a pattern. In the next beat there was again a jackal, at which E. had an unsuccessful pot with her Derringer.

A propos of this weapon, I should have mentioned that earlier in the day she had been guided to her post by Kollio. Imagine her feelings when this villainous-looking Albanian, with a sinister expression, drew an enormous knife and turned towards her. With great presence of mind she quickly produced her pistol. Unfortunately this heroism was wasted; Kollio's intentions were mercenary, not murderous. He merely wanted her to buy his knife as a curiosity!

Before going to Albania I had heard much of the jackals of the country, and their large size, but these

were no bigger than our Indian friend, but seemed more yellow. "Vixen" followed the line a long way, and when we got her back we proceeded to beats five and six over ground the same as on the first day, but both were blank, save of woodcock.

Next day's dawn saw us under way for Corfu, unanimously agreed that we had had the worst of luck, but congratulating ourselves at having, at least, no discreditable misses to own to. I, for my part, was also more than ever of the opinion that driving game of any size is a very poor sport.

Now at the risk of being told that every fool is born a critic, may I be allowed to point out what I believe to be the real reason we failed, and why every one is likely to fail who goes to Albania for boar-shooting, and puts himself unreservedly in the hands of the natives? Firstly, it is almost unnecessary to say (as I have several times said it in print before) that with the sole exception of the wolf, the boar is the most difficult of animals to drive, and yet there is hardly any other method of bringing him to gun The best of all, the baying a boar with a dachshund and creeping in for a shot, however successful in German forests, would not ever succeed in Albanian thickets, although that development of it, where one sportsman posts himself on the opposite side to that on which another tries to steal in, possibly might. Given, then, that in Albania driving is a necessity, how should it be conducted? First, and perhaps most important of all, the greatest attention should be paid to the wind in posting the guns. Secondly, there should be no admixture of dogs and men; the former, perhaps, running a hare or fox half a mile ahead, and thereby actually turning back pig that

the beaters have started in the right direction. Of the two alternatives, dogs *or* beaters, I should prefer, as a matter of personal taste, working these coverts with two couple of slow musical hounds, such as wire-haired bassets, with one man, to any number of beaters. Thirdly, if beaters are to be used (and few will have hounds with them in Albania to avoid this necessity), let them leave their dogs at home and go *silently*. The occasional tap of a stick, a muttered word or a whistle, will move the pig fast enough. In urging this I am only repeating a sportsman's axiom which applies to all sorts of game, but the result of its application in Albania should be phenomenal. I firmly believe that every pig along its seaboard knows that fiendish yells, shouts of "*Darramos*," and the yelping of curs simply mean danger in front, and consequently breaks back if he can. Lastly, of course, a sufficient number of guns to cover the ground should form the party, the nature of the country often preventing one man from seeing fifty yards in either direction. By our only being two on this occasion, we lost three distinct chances on the first day—in fact all the pig that came forward at all.

CHAPTER XVIII.

WITH THE GRAFTON.

It is not because I have no memories of smart gallops with this well-known pack that I prefer to recall a run of the other sort—a long and severe one, trying both to horse and man. It so happens, however, that my old diaries record more than one of this latter kind. Such were the two Mondays within a month when the meet on each occasion was at Adstone. Each time, too, we had a run of less than an hour in the morning. On both occasions *the* run began at two, the first ending with "Whoo-whoop! gone to ground," at Maidford at four-thirty. But of this I can only claim to have been "in" the first half, owing to want of condition in my second horse—a new one. On the second we ran fast for an hour and five minutes, and then checked and probably changed foxes. In ten minutes we were running again, and ran on till the fox fairly ran us out of scent a little to the south of Morton Pinkney. This run was also two hours and a half.

Then there was the time when, after a hot and uninteresting day in the woodlands of Yardley Chase, we got away in the evening with a game old dog-fox, who led us a pretty dance, over baked and dusty

fallows and grass nearly as hard, by Denton and Horton, till he died in the brook at Preston Deanery, half the field up at the finish, consisting of the late Lord Penrhyn and members of his family. This run lasted just two hours.

But the particular grind I have in my mind was longer and faster than any of these,—stop, though! I am beginning at the wrong end of my story.

Again it was a Monday, and Fawsley was the meet. Now it so happened that the year, which was nearly out, had been one of the wettest on record, and the country rode terribly deep. The week had been one of gales and rain, and the wind was still high as we trotted along to covert. Fawsley, however, is convenient for the Weedon contingent as well as for some of the Warwickshire men. Consequently the muster of sportsmen and sportswomen to meet Smith and the Grafton lady pack was a biggish one. Although the Pytchley had been thereabouts on the previous Saturday, Sir Rainald Knightley (since raised to the Peerage) had a fox ready for us in the Fawsley Woodyard, which ran first through some more of the coverts lying on the steep slope of the park.

Now mark the advisability of not knowing too much. Fawsley is a meet not noted for sport, and it has come to be a saying in the country that "any horse will do for Fawsley." I, however, was at this time new to the district, and consequently had out *two*, and those my best. Verily I had my reward.

As they reach the hill-top the wind is in our faces, and the bitches began to run hard. Through Badby Wood we go, hearing a holloa on by the village. For once it is a relief to get on the road—not the "'ard

'igh-road" to-day. Hounds run up Studboro' Hill. Now here is an earth, and some hounds mark at it. Before it can be well investigated we hear another holloa—still on.

Catesby is soon left behind, and near Catesby House "Brooksby" comes to grief over a wired fence. However, we see him on his feet though his horse is gone; so we press on.

"No account of this run in *The Field*," remarks somebody; but he was wrong, for before we reach Dane Hole our chronicler is with us again. Between this covert and Shuckburgh Hill we have some "intricate leps," as they say the other side of St George's Channel, but as most of the field have taken a wrong turn half a mile back, we have lots of room to pick our places and get safely over.

Up one side of the hill and down the other we go, our fox pointing as if for Napton. We are now in the North Warwickshire country. Somebody tells me we are entering a biggish bit of country. I look round for my second horseman—of course in vain.

Our fox has no heart for these big grass fields either, but turns short back past Lower Shuckburgh, and reascends the hill to Shuckburgh House. We have been running over three-quarters of an hour and cannot press our horses up this terrific ascent. As we come out of the shrubbery, however, we meet the bulk of the field. They have stopped a single hound, which was running back, but, strange to say, not one of them has viewed the fox..

I view something, however, that causes me as great—perhaps greater—pleasure, and that is my second horse. Rapidly as the change is effected, hounds are running hard again before I am ready.

We are to have the three-mile gallop to Catesby back again, on a line parallel to that by which we came. The ground is deeper than ever—the fences as nasty. I saw one sportsman engulfed in a narrow drain, and heard afterwards that it took an hour to get his horse out. Still it is forrard, forrard! Catesby is past, and Badby Village and Badby Wood is reached again. Our fox is, of course, too hot to dwell in the covert, but slips out at the bottom end and crosses the valley. By Miller's Farm he turns short back, keeping still to the east of the valley. I think if I had known what a big place that was that the huntsman gave me a lead over I should have gone to look elsewhere. Ignorance, however, takes the place of daring, and the good grey gives a kick back that leaves the gulf-like ditch well behind us.

Again our fox turns back, short of Newnham Village. No one, however, can chronicle all the short turns of a beaten fox, nor would they form interesting reading. Suffice it to say we cross the Nene (if it is the Nene that flows by Badby) several times.

At last the fox, who has already once been coursed in view, turns again for Badby Wood. He cannot face the hill, however, but betakes himself into a network of cottage gardens and paddocks, where we cannot follow. We have to clatter up the village street, and turn in, in more or less military order, through the arched gateway of a farmyard. As we file in we become aware that our fox is at bay. Phenomenal occurrence! But not in the open, dear reader, but under a movable hen-house on wheels, where no foxhound can creep in. The young master and some willing assistants jump off. The hen-house—which,

I daresay, had often paid toll to our quarry—is raised, and the pack dash in upon their victim.

What a scene! The great house and its bearers are swayed hither and thither, till there seems some chance of its falling and crushing the hounds. More assistance is forthcoming, however, and Smith is able to seize his fox and carry it out to the paddock behind, where it turns out to be—no *he* at all, but a remarkably fine old vixen, who had stood up before hounds just two hours and fifty minutes.

The last honours are paid to her, and on inquiry I am told I am fourteen miles from home. Anyhow, hounds will do no more. The amusing chat of one of our best known jockeys shortens my journey as far as Weedon.

Good-bye to the Grafton! Leicestershire, I believe, calls them "provincial," and even their Pytchley neighbours patronise. Nevertheless, if not the rose, they are near the rose, and no man who goes to them for sport will fail to get it.

CHAPTER XIX.

MY FIRST IBEX.

Until a few years ago I was under the impression that the only spot in Europe where any kind of ibex might be shot was Crete, those in the Italian Alps being exclusively reserved for royal rifles. At that time, however, I came across a magazine article by that well-known sportsman, Mr E. N. Buxton, describing an unsuccessful expedition to Crete in search of the animal, in which he referred to the island, or rather rock, of Antimilo as being also a habitat of the Grecian ibex—if, indeed, any had survived a massacre wrought amongst them by British naval officers, who, having driven them into a spot whence they could neither advance nor retreat, fired into them till nearly all were killed or wounded.[1]

[1] Dr Lorenz Liburnau in his brochure, *Die Wildziegen der Griechischen Inseln*, published for the Bosnian Government (Vienna, 1899), tells this story as follows: "The only foreigners who ever shot here were some Englishmen belonging to men-of-war cruising in these waters, who held big shoots in 1892 and 1893. In the former year twelve goats were shot in one day, and a kid captured; a very big buck had to be left lying in an inaccessible spot. All the ibex were carefully skinned, and the skins taken away. Later on the Englishmen had unpleasantness on account of their having no permission to shoot." It was no doubt one of these occasions which was described to me by Mr Gialeraki, when he said he had accompanied an English vice-admiral, whose party had shot seven ibex from the deck of a torpedo-boat.

At the beginning of the year 1897 I was at Corfu; and this seemed to me a favourable base for an expedition to the Greek islands, which still hold ibex —Antimilo and Joura (of the Sporades). Reference to Mr Gialeraki, the British Consular Agent at Milo, established the fact that there were undoubtedly goats to be shot on the former island by the payment of £1 each for the privilege. As regards the latter, the difficulties were far greater; and I had finally to get the Legation at Athens to assist me in order to get a permit.

I left Corfu on a Saturday evening in February, by a Greek steamer. The journey across Greece was then unfamiliar to me, but is possibly not so to the reader, so I will only remark that we left the Ionian Islands bathed in their usual rain to find the hills overlooking both sides of the Gulf of Corinth white with snow. At the Canal the sun shone out once more, and accompanied us to the Piræus. The City of the Violet Crown was wild with warlike excitement. Troops embarking, bands playing, demonstrations, and gesticulating politicians at every corner, were the order of the day. One result of the Cretan complications was to throw the steamship connection out of gear, and consequently to detain me twenty-four hours at Syra.

After this delay I embarked on the old *Panhellenion*, which had so often run the blockade in 1867, and we put out on a sea which for roughness and bitter cold might rival our own Channel. The wind, however, was on our beam, and under all sail we progressed famously. Towards evening, after we had called at the islands of Seriphos and Siphnos, the wind dropped, and we ran between Antimilo, behind which the sun

was setting, and Kimolo, over which a brilliant full moon was rising, and turned into the magnificent harbour of Milo, in which we passed through the whole Greek Squadron. During the whole week of my stay warships and torpedo-boats were coming and going. This combination of sport and war was somewhat embarrassing, and made me doubt whether I should get back to civilisation without considerable delay. No sooner had we anchored at Milo—or rather at Adamas, for that is the name of the port, a small town, some half century old, and inhabited almost entirely by Cretans—than I received a hospitable welcome from Mr Gialeraki, who unfortunately speaks no language but Greek, so that our intercourse was more limited than it might otherwise have been. He hastened to assure me (through his interpreter) that there was no doubt as to the presence of the animals I was in search of on the island, and confirmed his assertion next morning by producing a live one for my inspection. This animal had been wounded and captured by the shepherds some months before. Its age was estimated to be about six years, and its beautiful and shapely horns were about three-quarters of a yard long, yet it showed little grey about the withers, and was inferior in size to some I saw afterwards. In its bearing and outlines the "wild" look of the animal was unmistakable. It was about the size of a Bosnian chamois of the same age; and indeed the only striking difference between the two, besides of course the horns, beard, and absence of face markings, lay in the eye. In this animal it was quite yellow and goatish-looking, and this is the case with all the males. Very different is the soft and melting eye of the Alpine goat-antelope.

This animal afterwards passed into my possession, and was sent to the small zoological garden at Ilidže. Unfortunately it died at Mostar, only a day's journey from its destination. It is now stuffed in the Sarajevo Museum. Its horns are so far the "record" specimen of this ibex, twenty-seven inches and a half. I mean, of course, of the Antimilo breed, for there is a thirty-one-inch head (at Schonbrünn) from Crete; and specimens of those from the Asiatic continent are authenticated over fifty inches long.

The history of Antimilo is worth repeating. At the end of the Turkish rule it remained in Government hands, and the wild goats were supposed to be strictly preserved. About 1888 the present owner found some Turkish papers making it over to an ancestor — went to law with the Government, and gained his case. It is now let for sheep-grazing, and the tenant has the right, or apparently the concurrent right, of shooting the ibex. Mr Gialeraki estimated the ibex on the island at three hundred, but I found out afterwards that these absurd over-estimates were common among the Greeks. Herr Reiser, who shot on Antimilo in 1894, estimated them at about eighty, and as will be seen hereafter, the Antimilo ibex is probably now an extinct species.

I now commenced preparations for my expedition, and was introduced to the Robinson Crusoe of the island, to whom I supposed I was to play the part of Man Friday. Mr Gialeraki proposed to increase my suite by a countryman of his own—a mighty hunter. But when I learnt that the man in question was a Cretan refugee who had been ten days in Milo, I declined the offer, although it was enhanced by the information that he "had a very good gun." I have

long since learnt the impossibility of making Levantines and similar people see the difference between sport and slaughter. It is very strange that they should think us capable of taking long and expensive journeys merely to witness (or perhaps not even actually see) the wild animals we have come so far to seek being killed by others. On my return I saw the sportsman in question with a Gras rifle and a rucksack on his back, going down to embark on a ship conveying volunteers to Crete. The young French-speaking sailor who had been interpreting for me also offered to come if he could be of any use. I did not see that he could be, so refused his offer, and this refusal I had afterwards reason to deeply regret.

I had fixed the next day, the second of my stay, for my departure for Antimilo, but the northerly wind was so high that Crusoe declared it would be impossible to land there. I could therefore only wait patiently, and occupy the time with a visit to the ancient Melos, with its amphitheatre and other antiquities. The amphitheatre has a fine view over the harbour, with Antimilo in the distance. From this point of view the islet looks not unlike the Rock of Gibraltar, and it is about the same length, but the resemblance does not bear the test of closer inspection.

The natives of Milo seem to consider the place where the celebrated Venus was found as the most interesting thing they have to show, but there is of course nothing to be seen there but a ploughed field. It was interesting, however, to be assured that the statue was unearthed *complete*, and that the arms were broken off and dropped into the sea in the struggle between the French who were removing it

and the Turks who were endeavouring to prevent them.

Milo is intensely volcanic. At a place a quarter of a mile from Adamas I was shown a spot where, if the sulphurous soil is disturbed with a stick, a degree of heat insupportable to the hand is at once reached. As a resulting consequence of its nature the island is rich in minerals. Manganese, barytes, silver, sulphur, and several other mines are worked. I also visited the mediæval town. The place is buried in olive-trees. It has been abandoned as unhealthy. The usual result of irrigation and absence of sanitation combined is to make Levantine towns unhealthy. They then become known as feverish, and are abandoned. For instance, in Western Cyprus there are no less than three towns of Papho—Paleapapho, Neopapho (or Baffo), and Ktima. The first is only a few ruins, the second the huts of a few fever-stricken peasants standing in gardens, the third the modern town.

The next day proved in every way suitable for our departure, but Eastern dilatoriness delayed it till noon. The first thing we did was to call at a hamlet near the mouth of the harbour, where Crusoe embarked the rest of his crew, consisting of his three sons and their impedimenta, which to my disgust included two long-barrelled guns. I shook my head, but it was hopeless to make myself understood, and I desisted in despair. After this the wind dropped, and it was long after dark when our craft was safely beached at Antimilo.

I must now try to describe this island—no easy task. It consists, roughly speaking, of a long ridge, but this is broken into saddles and peaks,

and here and there level ground (query, the centre of old craters) occurs. From this central ridge the sides, always steep and often precipitous, run down, and almost invariably end in a sheer drop down to the water. The highest point is, I believe, that near the north end; the south end is entirely cut off by a long, low saddle, and is a mass of loose rocks. On the west side a fairly level peninsula runs out to seaward. On this side, at varying distances, are a few islets — mere barren rocks. Herr Reiser, of the Bosnian Museum, describes the island as follows:—

"The character of Antimilo is quite different from that of the three times larger island of Joura. Erimomilos (the modern Greeks only know it by this name) is of volcanic origin, and the red, violet, and blue volcanic rock disintegrates very slowly, and makes little *humus*, so that only a few prickly shrubs, and hardly a dozen deformed wild fig- and olive-trees, can grow on it. In three walks across the island we could only find, in addition to the above, five plants. The whole appearance of the naked slopes reminds one of our mountains above the forest line. The rocks are wonderful, bizarre, and shell-shaped. Hollows, large rocks scooped out in the shape of a prompter's box, and even real caves, are sought out by the ibex as places of refuge, and for rest. Their favourite haunts are the steep cliffs and the deep moraine-filled glens of the north and west sides of the island, whose only landing-place is on the east side. Except in the very interesting rain-filled crater, on the very highest point, which the ancient Greeks have turned into a pond with a wrought stone rim, there is

no fresh water on Antimilo. There are, however, brackish water-holes near the sea-level, which the ibex use regularly. Besides these animals there is now nothing on the island but tame sheep.[1] Some years ago there were tame goats also,[2] but they ran away and had to be shot. According to the shepherd, Giorgio Vichos, there were six to seven hundred head of ibex on the island ten years ago. Now he correctly estimates them at from seventy to eighty head."

I slept on the bottom of our boat on this occasion, and as such couches are the best alarums that I know of, I was up at dawn next morning; and by seven o'clock I started off with Giorgio (to give Crusoe his real name) and his eldest son, who rejoiced in the poetic appellation of "Star." Of the two weapons I had brought with me I selected a single ·400 "Snaffle" rifle, whose twenty-two inch barrel contrasted greatly with the yard-long barrels of the guns which my companions insisted on taking.

The landing-place at Antimilo is at the bottom of the slope formed by an old volcano, of which the seaward side has disappeared. We worked our way by the best path on the island, up into the crater on a projecting part of whose cup Giorgio has a hut, which, however, I did not see on this occasion. Thence we climbed up the left rim, which is fairly intact, and whose lip here forms the main ridge. Crossing this in a somewhat southerly direction we came out on a lateral ridge overhanging the sea on the other side — a good spying place. Northward of this is a very steep slope, covered

[1] The shepherd had some donkeys there in 1897, and also in 1898.

[2] Mr William James saw tame goats there as lately as 1886.

with moraine and seamed with gullies. Such places are the favourite haunt of the wild goat; and at the end of about twenty minutes I was able to put my glass on my first herd—four does and three kids—crossing the moraine about three hundred yards away. I could not but be reminded of the chamois of the Herzegovina, the last animals which I had stalked, and on very similar-looking ground. They fed up between some ridges of rock, and were lost to view, though I continued to hear the stones they dislodged, as they moved from place to place, rolling down. The sun was already so hot that I was glad to fasten my handkerchief turban-fashion round the small cap I wore. This was my first Mediterranean shooting trip, and never again did I go unprovided with a cap either with a good peak at the back or a flap to let down when required in sun or rain.

At the end of half an hour or so we decided to move on. Giorgio, who evidently thought there ought to be more ibex amongst the ridges in front of us, left his son where we were, and making a long circuit, we came out facing our old position at a distance of perhaps a quarter of a mile. We were now overlooking the same moraine from the other side, and behind us the remains of old walls and cleared ground showed that at one time there had been cultivation, the only thing of the kind on the island, except in some of the crater bottoms.

Nothing was to be seen from this point, so the shepherd left me and went a couple of hundred yards lower down. Still no result, so he shouted out a question to his son, who replied. Immediately a buck ibex appeared on the ridge half-way across, looking seawards for his enemy. It was my first

sight of a male wild goat amongst his native rocks, and very impressive I thought it. Without a thought of me, who, indeed, judged it too far, both Greeks fired—I might almost say exchanged shots, for the goat must have been almost exactly between them. Peasants in all countries look to the bag, not the sport; and I, alas! was on this occasion powerless to remonstrate, though I well knew that nothing but severe and distinct orders would put a stop to such proceedings. However, this time no harm was done, for both missed, and their shots had the effect of puzzling the animal, which turned towards me. I moved on to get a better view—I should rather say a view, for the ibex had gone into a ravine, and I had nothing but the rolling of the stones to guide me—and, unfortunately, in so doing I dislodged a piece of rock, which went thundering down to the sea and turned him again. He was making up-hill now, and for bad ground too—a mass of rocks,—but Giorgio's signals guided me, and I clambered up in hot haste to cut him off. He saw me first though, and turned away; but I knew that it was the last chance of a shot, and knew too that a stern shot, if not so pretty as the shoulder shot, is very nearly as effective, so I fired. That shot practically ended the matter, though when Giorgio went to gather him he did move off, and finally lay down on a ridge of rock that went sheer down to the water. I had a difficult crawl to give him the *coup-de-grâce*, and then the shepherds had a still more awkward job to drag him up to fairly level ground.

This was most satisfactory, for though the beast was small and quite brown, save a little grizzle about

the shoulders, I had scored within a couple of hours of starting. My only fear was that my luck was too good to last, and that I should lose a good one later on. After the gralloch we crossed the ridge to the crater again, and left the buck to be fetched by the shepherd's younger sons later on. Before noon we came to a spring, or rather hole in a water-course, and had our lunch. Giorgio produced a bag of limpets he had secured in the early morning, and I was surprised to find how good they were. Strange to say, none of this family smoked, and though this saved me tobacco, it was unsociable. When I had finished my solitary pipe we went on, and half an hour later we caught sight of two does, not much more than two hundred yards away. I watched them for some time with the glass. One had a white patch across the loins—a curious variation, due no doubt to the existence at one time of tame goats on the island. Next day I saw a doe nearly black.[1] I again pantomimed to Giorgio that I would not shoot at females or small animals, and we went on round the north-west corner of the island.

When we had walked for some time longer, we espied a magnificent buck, very grey, and with horns which seemed to me enormous. It must be remembered, however, that this was my first experience of wild goats, whose horns moreover seem especially large to one fresh from chamois-shooting. As a matter of fact these horns were probably no larger than those I had seen on Mr Gialeraki's live specimen at Milo. I daresay bigger have been

[1] Herr Reiser saw these odd-coloured does in '94. I saw them again—in fact two black ones—in December '98.

bagged, though probably none over thirty inches; but, as already said, there is no record of them. After we had watched this buck for some time he fed over a ridge, and Giorgio motioned us to advance. His stalking tactics were of the simplest. He merely went straight up to the beast, which I should not have dared to have done, as it was obvious that the buck might at any moment look over the ridge and see us. However, as I could say nothing, I followed meekly. The boldness of the manœuvre was successful. In not much more than a quarter of an hour the old fellow "set" his game. I, of course, dropped too, though I could not make the beast out, and commenced to creep in cautiously. Utterly disregarding me, both peasants advanced with their guns "at the ready." Recollections of the morning soon convinced me that if I wanted a shot I must do the same, and as the result I came suddenly on the animal, lying down, at short range. I dared not wait for a steady aim. The snap-shot missed, and the buck disappeared, followed by shots from both the shepherds. I felt as if I could have cried; but, reloading, I scrambled over the boulders, and came out on a cliff—too late. Not one, but two, noble bucks were tearing down a steep slope at a pace which defies description, scattering the frightened sheep in all directions. I am sure I have never seen the speed of these animals equalled by chamois; and I think the ibex are quite as active amongst the cliffs.

Presently a third big buck came up on a ridge a quarter of a mile away to reconnoitre; but he, too, alarmed probably by the hurrying sheep, disappeared. After this we went on sadly, I much wishing I could give Giorgio a piece of my mind.

"Did he think I had come all this way to see him miss game?" I wondered. We passed the crater, now a lakelet, referred to by Herr Reiser, and then we arrived at a deep ravine backed by tremendous cliffs, almost sheer. We were going towards the sea on the Milo side when suddenly Giorgio hurried me off to the right, to the very edge of the chasm. There, ascending the almost perpendicular rocks opposite, was a band of seven magnificent bucks. This time the shepherds showed no desire to anticipate my shot, and no wonder, for the range was an extreme one for me. I threw myself down and loaded, but waited for some time, hoping that, like chamois, they would presently stop and look back. Finding they did not, and urged by Giorgio, I did take a shot at the biggest that showed clear, but my want of faith in myself was justified. Then I watched them disappear round the face of the cliff, each huge pair of horns being outlined against the sky as they did so. What heads! The last ibex was so light a grey as to be almost white. It would appear that the old bucks leave the herds about the time the does drop their kids, for on my second visit to Antimilo, which was in the beginning of December, the best bucks were with the herds, and not in bands by themselves like this. The kids are born in January.

After this we commenced our tiring descent to the boat. During the afternoon the sounds of heavy guns from Crete, the nearest land to the southward, had been distinctly audible, and this, as I afterwards learned, was the very day on which the ships fired on the insurgents. Next morning, too, I heard guns, but that was distinctly a salute—seven spaced shots. I was almost beat by the time I got down to the boat,

but a dip in the sea refreshed me. Giorgio made signs to know if I wanted to return to Adamas, and I thought I made him understand that I wanted a big ibex first. It turned out afterwards that he had understood I wished to return the first evening, otherwise we might have slept at the hut, which would have saved me part of the laborious journey down and up again.

The *fauna* of Antimilo is strictly limited, as, indeed, according to Herr Reiser, is the *flora*. In fact, except the domestic animals and ibex, I should say there were only birds and reptiles there. I did see traces of what looked like a fox, but might have been a dog,[1] and the skeletons of animals I saw on the hillside were so little displaced as to negative the idea of reynard's existence. Rats and mice there are apparently none, and my food-basket on the open hillside was untouched. Of birds, besides sea-birds, I saw plenty of ravens, hawks, larks, chats, and a wren. The only reptiles I saw were lizards, but there are said to be plenty of snakes. I was told of one weighing eight oke (21 lb.). It seems a queer way of reckoning up a snake, but it would be a big fellow that weighed a stone and a half. Lastly, there are seals, for I saw one on the way across.

That night we dined on ibex liver toasted on an iron ramrod—or rather I did, for the shepherds boiled a leg of ibex, and were rather surprised I would not share it.

Next day we started at twenty minutes before seven. My remonstrances had, apparently, produced some effect, for only the lad went with me, and left his gun behind. Giorgio pantomimed that he would

[1] At the time of my second visit the shepherds said it was a dog.

go round another way and meet me. Altogether things looked better, but when we had got to the top of the hill I was surprised to see the boat at sea. I understood Star to explain that this would drive the game up from the cliffs, which seemed a good idea. We went round the southern end of the island, but saw nothing till nine o'clock, when we made out a single doe far below us. Then we made for our look-out place of the previous day. Here we spied three does on the big moraine hurrying upwards from the sound of voices in the boat. Half an hour later another herd of seven appeared, up wind this time. The sense of smell, however, seemed less acute in these ibex than in any other animal of the genus I know; or was it that the wind hereabouts blew upwards?

The lad said one of this last lot was "μεγάλος," but the glass showed him to be very brown, though his head was certainly better than my first one. I did not trouble about the beast, but when they fed to within two hundred yards (although we were lying quite without cover), with no more precaution than suspicious stares on the part of an old doe, I did wriggle into some sort of shooting position and loaded. I say "some sort of position," because I was in anything but a Bisley attitude, both elbows in the air, and only a small prickly bush between me and the sheer drop into the sea. Still I did fire the shot, not taking much pains about it. The bullet went pretty close, for he jumped clean round. At first the ibex failed to locate their foe, but at last they saw the smoke and disappeared. If I had only known that this was to be my last chance at Antimilo, I could easily have waited till they had fed over the ridge and made sure of this fellow.

We now worked on to our water-hole of the day before, where I drank more than I ate. It was very hot again, and I was beginning to feel rather beat. Then I was taken down-hill on the western side, and to my surprise, after descending cliffs fit to make the hair of anything less active than a wild goat stand on end, and which were full of their sleeping lairs, arrived at the boat. I imagined the programme was to take me by water to some place where I should have a better chance; but it proved to be an eight hours' beat to windward into Adamas, where we arrived at nine o'clock at night.

My shoot, as such, had been quite spoilt by my inability to converse with my men. When I was back at Milo, and could get an interpreter, much was cleared up. It had not been plainly explained to Giorgio that I was prepared to devote three days, if necessary, to getting a good head; and whilst they thought I was in a hurry to return, I imagined they were afraid of the weather, which looked a good deal like wind. However, I had had some opportunity of observing a most interesting animal in its wild state, and to my mind this is almost as delightful as bagging him.

I put a series of questions to Giorgio before we parted — through the interpreter, of course — and learned that he had known the island well for eight years—in fact, even since the day that it passed out of Government hands.

"There were then," he said, "some eight hundred ibex, but we have killed a good many—over a hundred in some years. Perhaps there may be a hundred left. Shoot does? Oh yes! Everything we can. (This probably accounted for two skeletons of kids I had noticed among the rocks.) We kill most in the

summer—sitting up over the water-hole at daybreak. There is no water anywhere else then, so they must come there."

That night saw me berthed once more on the old *Panhellenion*, and the day after we once more thrashed through a rough sea to Syra, carrying some hundreds of reservists, volunteers, and refugees—all very sea-sick. At Syra, contrary to my expectation, we found the corresponding steamer awaiting us, and with another change at Patras, I got back to Corfu some days under the fortnight, not dissatisfied on the whole, but fully determined to give Antimilo and those big heads another turn some other day.

At Corfu I found a permit from the Greek Government for me to shoot ibex on the island of Joura awaiting me. Mr Gialeraki had also given me a letter from a relative of his in the island of Skopelos —the nearest steamer post to Joura. Unfortunately, just as all my preparations were made, war was declared between Greece and Turkey, which disorganised all steamship services and everything else, so I had to give up my trip for the time and take steamer to Trieste *en route* to England instead.

CHAPTER XX.

WITH THE PYTCHLEY.

"Mr Jorrocks," we are told by Surtees in his immortal work,[1] at length ventured right down into the heaven of heavens—the grass—or what he calls the "cut 'em down countries." Our writer never clearly defined what he meant by the "heaven of heavens," but he is generally understood to mean what we now call *par excellence* "The Shires," in which expression the counties of Leicester, Rutland, West Lincoln, and Northampton are included. This latter is the county hunted by the Pytchley.

Few packs are better known, and no other has yet had to fix certain of its meets at abnormally early hours in the hope of lessening the enormous crowd which appears at those gatherings. In my experience these meets are only equalled in size by those of the Devon and Somerset Staghounds, where five hundred horsemen and as many carriages is no uncommon sight. But there is room for all on the wide moor, and no farmers to complain of damage done to crops, except, indeed, by the deer. I have never attended one of the Pytchley early meets, but I am told that the attendance at them is only little lessened by the

[1] *Handley Cross*, chap. vii. p. 57, original edition.

earliness of the hour. Perhaps some of the keenest sportsmen wish it were a little earlier, so as to enable them to hunt with the Pytchley *first*, and some other pack afterwards, and thus get seven days' hunting in the week. "To hunt six days a-week, and talk about it the seventh," was somebody's idea of earthly bliss. As the opportunity of doing so has not come in everybody's way, I may perhaps be allowed to express the opinion that six days a-week is *rather* too much. For though the season I tried it—in which, by the way, we had two months without one day's frost—I was perhaps fitter than at any other time in my life, I was drawn a bit fine by March, and, truth to tell, a little inclined to look forward to Sunday, and to remark about three o'clock, "They won't do any more good; anybody going my way?" Whereas in other years it had been, "Going home! Oh, no; they're sure to find at so and so." In fact, I distinctly recollect one evening, ten years ago, with the H.H. (I wonder if Mr Arthur Wood does?) when he and I, and possibly one or two more besides the servants, dragged on after a beaten fox till long *after dark*, jumping our fences on the principle of putting all the steam possible on at each, as we could not possibly see what they were. The "beaten fox" beat us all the same. But I have got a long way from the Pytchley, and must "try back."

At the time I write of, the Pytchley were hunted by a Goodall; to how many members of which family have I not cause to be thankful for good sport shown? The day was a Friday, but, nevertheless, I fancy the meet was larger than those on a Saturday in Kildare, the biggest fox-hunting gatherings I had then seen. It is unnecessary for me to chronicle those who were

present, even if I knew them all. Suffice it to say that the beard of the Red Earl was our *oriflamme* that day.

The meet was at Brington, and the draw Nobottle Wood. Hounds soon began to run in covert. A stranger in the land, I had nothing to guide me but instinct, and that took me, almost by myself, to a quiet down-wind corner facing a church and forge.

I had hardly been there two minutes when the fox broke within fifty yards of me. After letting him cross the lane to my left, I tallied him away. Goodall promptly came to my holloa, and no doubt hardly noticed the stranger in the grey frock-coat, whom he thanked for the information necessary to enable him to lay on his hounds.

I hugged myself at the idea of the excellent start I had got, for hounds ran fast, and a lot of the field were slipped. Alas! it was not to be my luck to participate in a real good thing. In less than ten minutes heads went up, just short of the Weedon Road, and a swing round proved that they had overrun the line, which had ended in a drain two fields back.

Some time was given up to an unsuccessful effort at eviction—a policy one would hardly expect Lord Spencer to favour. English eviction, however, is well known to be a different thing from Irish, and on this occasion vulpine eviction proved a failure.

We had a longish trot before we again heard hounds. Very unexpectedly they crossed the line of a travelling fox on East Haddon Hill, and, passing the very spot where the victim of a horrible murder has since been found (was it not by a whip of this very pack, and by a fox-terrier of the Master's?), we

clattered down the road to the railway arch at Althorp Park Station.

Hounds had slipped away so suddenly that it was some time ere the long cavalcade on the high-road became aware of the fact, and in that procession I was rather near the tail. Consequently my start this time was as bad as it had been good the first.

Being a stranger in the land, I am a little doubtful if I give the points correctly. Was it Althorp Station where we first crossed the line? All I know is that hounds ran fast, twice crossing the line to the southward, and once back again under a culvert to the north side, but it was not till we left this always unpleasant accompaniment to fox-hunting that I got fairly on terms with the pack, then fleeting mutely up a bank covered with small enclosures divided by big fences.

Church Brampton was the name of the village on the bank, I believe, but we left it a little to the right. The fox was pointing towards the dark woods of Harlastone, and fast as hounds ran, he beat them there and saved his brush. But for the good start he had and the doubles at the railway line, he would probably never have got there.

Five-and-thirty minutes was the time from the find; and though, truth to tell, I have seen faster, and the country was probably the worst in the hunt, I was quite satisfied with my first gallop with this celebrated pack.

Eighteen seasons had passed and gone when, by the kindness of a gentleman living in the country, I saw the Pytchley again. "You were doubtless surprised at the changes," says the reader. No; as a matter of fact I was surprised at the sameness.

Even a sprinkling of the familiar faces of old days in the Grass Countries were there, and chiefest perhaps, "Brooksby," the perennial, whose occupation's o'er since then.

That there were changes I admit; the most noticeable, no doubt, being the motor-cars. There were, too, more habits in the field than of yore, still of these we had a fair share in 1891. Also the young gentleman, who rode up and proposed to relieve the stranger of a couple of sovereigns, was—in that capacity, for he was Secretary as well as highwayman—a novelty. But for the rest, the scene—at Brock Hall, to be exact—was much the same. For the Red Earl, read Lord Annaly; for poor Goodall, Frank Freeman—a promising huntsman, but with something to learn before he can fill Will's boots; and the picture is complete.

As for sport, my luck, as usual, was out. The Pytchley almost made a record by drawing covert after covert blank till two o'clock, when the lower clump at Brington produced the desired article. They rattled him to Althorp Park Station, and then swung left-handed to kill him in Brington Village. Nor was later sport better; besides, I had a train to catch. I had, however, an interesting talk with the man riding my second horse, who turned out to be an ex-stableman of Lord Spencer's day at the kennels, and who somewhat surprised me by describing some of the occasions on which he had, by Goodall's orders, turned down a fox in the covert, where the unsuspecting White-collars shortly afterwards saw him "found." Let me not be misunderstood: these were native foxes, knowing the country. But it appears that if there were any doubts about finding, my

informant (or another, I suppose) would be sent to a certain covert with a box. The rattle of John Isaac's horse's hoofs approaching, it was the signal for release; and the rest occurred *secundum artem.* But I have chuckled a few times over the story.

Since then I have seen the Pytchley three or four times—I mean since the day at Brock Hall—but their doings on those occasions would not particularly interest the reader.

CHAPTER XXI.

SHARK-SHOOTING IN THE MAURITIUS.

Over thirty years ago fate landed me in Port Louis, the capital and port of the Island of Mauritius. I was strolling along through the streets when a cheery voice hailed me:

"Rather different to the Grande Rue de Pera," it said.

I turned round, and there was an old acquaintance, R—— of the —— Highlanders. We had last foregathered in Constantinople what time the "clouds in the East," which resulted in the Russo-Turkish war, were gathering blackly on the political horizon.

"Why, R——, what are you doing here?" I cried.

"My good fellow, I am the Robinson of the island—

> 'My right there is none to dispute,
> From the centre right down to the sea,
> I am lord of the fowl and the brute.'

In plain English, I am the commandant of Port Louis. My detachment consists of a few sickly Scotsmen and three British subalterns, of whom

one is at the sanatorium at Curepipe, while the other two take it in turns to do duty and lie in bed with the local fever."

"Don't you get fever, then?"

"Of course I don't. I am always about. The planters give me lots of deer-shooting, and there are some duck at the back of the island. But what are *you* doing here?"

"Faith, I hardly know; you must ask the skipper of the good ship lying in the harbour there. A fortnight ago I had no idea I should ever see this place, and now it appears I am in for a considerable stay here."

"Well, we must try and make the stay agreeable. I think I can promise you a day's deer-shooting, and to-morrow we will try the sharks. Come along now and have some lunch."

Shark-shooting, as I learnt now, was R——'s invention, and he had carried it to rare perfection. He had killed, so he told me, over a hundred of these pests of the sea, but the supply was apparently inexhaustible. His usual method I shall describe presently, but it was sometimes varied. "Some little time ago," said he, "a cattle ship arrived from Madagascar, and there was a dead bullock on board. I begged the body, and had it moored near the Bell Buoy outside the harbour. Then half a dozen of us went off in a boat, and standing on the platform round the buoy fired regular volleys into the sharks which had collected in large numbers. Their blood attracted others, and in an hour the scene beggared description. The water was churned into blood-stained foam, in the midst of which the black fins sailed to and fro. Besides those we

picked up, we must have killed a dozen which were torn to pieces by their brethren." This incident was illustrated and described in *The Graphic* at the time. Meanwhile we had arrived at R——'s bungalow, which was decorated with sharks' jaws.

"This is my best pair," he said, picking them up and passing them over my head. The circumference was large enough to allow them to pass freely over my shoulders. I shuddered. R—— called his orderly and told him to have a dozen *chiens marrons* ready in the morning. These are the common pariah dogs of the East, which go by this name in this semi-French colony.

Accordingly, next morning after breakfast, we embarked in a shore-boat, taking with us our lunch and the half-dozen wretched dogs which were destined to be "butchered to make a Mauritian holiday." We pulled out of the harbour past the Bell Buoy, and finally reaching the lightship some couple of miles to seaward, we went on board. We were warmly welcomed by the light-keeper and his assistant, whom R—— pointed out to me as "the black harpooner." He was a negro of herculean proportions. Our preparations were soon made. They consisted in tying the wretched dogs in two lots of three, each lot being fastened to a long line. They were tossed overboard, and, floating under the ship's counter, were put out of their misery by a ball through their head. This was rather a butcherly business, but the bloodshed was necessary to attract the sharks. Up to the present we had not seen the sign of one. The lines were paid out till the baits were floating many yards from the ship, and we sat down to wait.

In about twenty minutes a black fin appeared moving to and fro near one bait, but rather shyly. The harpooner, who had brought his weapon, the beam of which was a huge pole, commenced by pulling in the second bait. Then the other was drawn in very slowly, the shark following. At last it was right under the counter. The shark seemed unwilling to close with it, and we began to think we must fire. At last he made up his mind, and, dashing in, turned up his white belly to seize the bait.

At that moment the black raised his harpoon, drawing up his figure to its height. He looked like a statue in ebony. The harpoon sped true, and R—— and I emptied our rifles into the shark, which plunged violently and made off, taking out yards of the line. The lightship man, harpooner, and our boatmen all "tailed on" to the rope, but still they had to give ground. Meanwhile R—— and I fired whenever we could get a clear shot. At last the struggles got weaker, and the line began to come in foot by foot. When the shark was right under the counter a couple of bullets in the head finished him. A noose was thrown over his tail, and he was drawn up to the gangway. He was between eight and nine feet long. The harpooner cut out his weapon, the baits were let out again, and we sat down to lunch.

The view from the lightship is very fine, the mountains all around being of the most rugged and curious shapes, while highest of all rises the extraordinary "Pieter Bot," shaped like a gigantic spear-head. Strange to say, it has been repeatedly ascended, though it is necessary to put up some

sort of scaffolding to surmount the part which overhangs. To the left of St Louis we could see the lovely gardens of the Pamplemousse, which, as far as I recollect, contain the tomb of Paul and Virginia. At all events it is near there. What a pity it seems such a lovely island should be the hotbed of fever — which, by the way, has been introduced within the memory of man. When we had finished lunch several more of the black fins were in sight, cruising to and fro. Several times the baits were hauled in, but the sharks refused to come within harpooning distance.

"The brutes are getting shy, I think," said R——.

"Well, sir, you've given them a pretty good dressing, I think," said the light-keeper.

It was obvious we should not get another chance of harpooning, so we opened fire at about fifty yards. The blood of the sharks we hit attracted more, and no doubt several were killed, although we were unable to pick any up afterwards.

On our way back R—— apologised for the badness of the sport.

"Not at all," I said; "I have enjoyed it immensely. I never shot a shark before in my life, and I have always hated the brutes. I shall be able to say I have taken part in *the* distinctive sport of Mauritius."

"This is my own particular invention," said R——; "nobody ever heard of it before, and they laugh at me now and chaff me about the *requins*. The distinctive sport is the *chasses*, or deer-drives; but it will be hard lines if I don't manage to show you one of those too before you go."

I must say I thought R——'s invention was worthy

of imitation; and if our soldiers and sailors in tropical stations, who find time hang heavy on their hands, were only to try their hands at it, the number of these sea pests might be substantially reduced. Yet even sharks have their uses, I suppose, as the father of one of my friends once found out. Wishing to bathe in a Ceylon river, he asked a native to show him a place where there were no alligators. The native took him to a pool close to the estuary. After his dip, and when he was drying himself, the European asked his guide why there were never any alligators in that pool.

"Because, sar," replied the Cingalese, "plenty 'fraid of sharks."

CHAPTER XXII.

HUNTING IN THE INDIES.

I. THE QUARRY.

"In India," said the immortal Mr Jorrocks, "they hunt the jackall (*sic*)—not at all a sportin' animal I should say, from the specimen in the Zoologicals." [1]

In spite of the denunciation of so great a sporting authority, I venture to enter a plea for the jackal as a beast of chase. Moreover, as Surtees' immortal work was published half a century ago, the above quotation proves that even then our Anglo-Indian predecessors made the jackal take the place of reynard of the land of their birth. To this day the existence of the Bombay Hunt, the Poona Hounds, and other regular packs in the East, prove that the "jack" is considered his not altogether unworthy representative.

Not that it must be supposed that there are no foxes in India. Two varieties of the species divide the Indian peninsula. To the south it is the Indian fox who holds sway, while, commencing on the northern borders of Central India, the desert fox replaces him in Scinde, the Punjaub, and North-West. In

[1] *Handley Cross*, chap. vii. p. 67, original edition.

Ceylon, which I propose to include in my chapter, there are no foxes. To the superficial observer the above-named two sorts of foxes appear almost similar. Both are very small, their bodies being about the size of a large English rabbit. Both are light-grey in colour, with large ears and fine bushy "brushes," that of the desert variety having a large white "tag." Both are exceedingly swift. There are two reasons why they are unsuitable for hunting. In the first place, although they do not quite imitate the unsportsmanlike precedent of the Indian hare in popping into the very first hole they come to, they are rarely found far from their own earths or those of their brethren, into which they soon disappear. The second reason is, however, still worse. Whatever the reason, Indian foxes leave absolutely no scent. I have seen fox-hounds find one in a tiny covert, and get away right on his brush, only to lose him directly a swell of ground hid him from view. I may say that when one handles them there is no foxy odour perceptible. Still, remembering what a tremendous scent the red-deer and other "sweet-scented beasts of chace" leave, one hesitates to accept this as the reason.

The jackal has neither of these disadvantages. At least he does not go to ground nearly as often as an English fox, and the scent he leaves is as good as climatic conditions and the nature of the ground will admit. So well known an animal requires little description. Suffice it to say that he is rather larger than a fox, with much longer legs, and a much shorter brush. In colour he is a yellowish-grey, the fur in winter being exceedingly beautiful. I have killed them with hair five inches long about the

shoulders. About one in ten thousand has a "horn," —that is to say, the frontal bone projects to such an extent that the skin forms a callous projection between, and rather above the eyes. The natives attach many fabulous properties to these "horns," and value them accordingly. I have only seen one in my life.

A jackal is for one reason an exasperating and a difficult beast to hunt. This, that he never seems to know his own mind about where he is going. Consequently, the Indian huntsman has nothing whatever to guide him in making a cast. Given a check in England, unless the fox has obviously been headed, the line is, ninety-nine times out of a hundred, "on." In my Indian experience I only twice knew a jackal to be headed, but I have frequently known one in the middle of a run turn off at right angles for no reason at all. In England, again, a fox makes for a certain "point," which is, or should be, known to the huntsman. A jackal, unless found near rocky hills—for which he invariably makes—has no point, and seems to wander aimlessly on till he is either killed or lost.

I now come to the hares. The Indian hare (*L. ruficaudatus*) may be summed up in a very few words. It is useless for hunting, equally so for coursing, and not worth eating. It is not want of scent which renders it useless for hunting, for the scent is very strong, and fox-hounds are very apt to run riot on it. What renders it useless for hunting, and nearly so for coursing, is its propensity for going to ground. It never loses any opportunity of doing this, and, as the plains of India are covered with holes in all directions, it does not lack opportunity,

and usually goes to ground in the first hundred yards. Tommy Atkins, who is addicted to whippets and similar lurchers, invariably digs her out on these occasions, and thus secures half a dozen hares on most of his "hunting days." I may here remark that I have known our English hare to go to ground when pressed. On October 2, 1888, I saw this happen with the Quarme Harriers in Devonshire. In England, however, it is at least as rare as a fox taking to a tree, whereas in India it is the rule.

The Ceylon hare (*L. nigricollis*), on the contrary, never goes to ground. Though not possessing the speed or stoutness of the European variety, it makes a good fight for its life before a pack of harriers. This hare, undoubtedly, is a scavenger, and I am inclined to suspect the Indian hare of the same habit. Indeed, I am doubtful if any species of hare can claim entire acquittal on this charge. The Mosaic law is otherwise justified with regard to prohibited flesh—therefore should we suppose that one animal only, which is really a clean feeder, appears on the black list?

With regard to the deer tribe, I have no experience of hunting any of them with hounds in India, but in Ceylon the sambar is regularly hunted with fox-hounds. With this exception, the only deer I have seen hunted is the muntjac. When hunted, their run is very similar to that of the roe-deer, and they rarely leave the covert.

The sambar is larger than the Exmoor red-deer, and chocolate-brown in colour. The horns, which carry six points, are much finer in the Indian stags than those of Ceylon. It would, I think, be possible

to hunt them in some parts of India, but as a rule it is not done. In fact I never heard of such a thing, but it may be done in the Madras Presidency.

II. HUNTING WITH GREYHOUNDS IN THE INDIAN PLAINS.

In writing of the heading of this chapter I have purposely avoided the use of the word "coursing," because I consider the word cannot properly be taken to mean the pursuit of the fox. A second reason for my doing so consists in the fact that of coursing proper I know nothing, for I have never seen greyhounds at work in England. This may seem a strange confession for a man devoted to sport to make; but the leash never had any charms for me. Trotting along the boundless plains, with a couple of hounds running by one's side, and ready for any four-footed animal which might appear, is, to my mind, quite a different class of amusement. In English coursing, judging from written descriptions, the judge must be the only man who really gets any fun. Mr Jorrocks can hardly have ever acted in that capacity, or else his famous stricture on the sport—"Now of all the slow, starvation, great-coat, comforter, worsted-stockin', dirty nose sorts of amusement, that same melancholy coursin' is to me the most miserably contemptible,"[1]—would have remained unspoken.

When, many years ago, I first went out to India, I landed at the end of winter, and was promptly

[1] *Handley Cross*, chap. xxix. p. 221.

ordered to a station as nearly as possible in the middle of the great peninsula. By the advice of an old *qui-hi*, I had taken out a couple of English greyhounds, of good pedigree, which he assured me I should find better for the liver than medicine. My hounds had borne the voyage well, and arrived at my new home in good condition, owing to my great care on their journey up-country, which was both long and hot.

Arrived at my station and settled down, I was naturally desirous of trying them, and accordingly one hot April morning I had my horse saddled, and soon after five o'clock I started for some barren undulating country a mile or two from my bungalow.

For some time I saw nothing. At last a hare jumped up. The greyhounds, of the best blood in England, soon raced up to her, but after a turn or two she suddenly disappeared! When I arrived at the spot I found the dogs looking as astonished as myself over an open hole. I confess I was quite unprepared for this unsportsmanlike manœuvre, which soon became familiar to me.

Before long I viewed a fox. The Indian foxes, as I have said before, are exceedingly swift. Consequently they generally give a good run, and in the hot weather not infrequently beat good greyhounds, who become so distressed by thirst and exhaustion as to give up the chase. On this occasion the ground was soft and sandy, and consequently favourable to the hounds. Greyhounds suffer fearfully from the stony ground in India. I have often seen their claws nearly cut off. This time they soon turned and re-turned the fox, and wound up by running alongside of him, snapping at him but not daring

to seize the unaccustomed quarry in spite of my encouragement. Finally, the fox made for a rocky hillock covered with cactus bushes, unsighted them, and got to ground. This was provoking, and I did not find again.

Two days afterwards, having ascertained that jackals frequented a rocky hill not very far from my house, I went out to see if I could try to induce them to tackle this quarry. I took a couple of coolies with me, and, posting myself with the dogs on one side of the hill, sent them to beat it from the other. Complete success crowned this manœuvre, for two jackals broke close to me. I cheered on the dogs, who speedily raced up to a "jack" but refused to close with him. The brute showed fight, snarling and snapping at the greyhounds, and waited till I was close to him, when he made off. This time the dogs would not even follow. Completely disheartened, I returned home, and the same result occurred the next day and each time I went out. I began to think my coursing would never come to any good, when, by good luck, I heard of two greyhounds, crossed with the native Rampore breed, which were warranted to tackle anything. I wrote to say I would buy them, and my offer being accepted, I sent a man to Allahabad to fetch them.

Meanwhile I had been considering the question of how greyhounds ought really to be managed during the Indian summer. I had already discovered that it was no good expecting dogs to be equal to the efforts that might reasonably be expected from them in England; in fact, that it was necessary to convey them to and from the ground. Even then they soon tired. So I set to work to design a

coursing van, of which, as I afterwards used a similar one for fox-hounds, I subjoin a description.

I first got a pair of wheels which were strong enough to stand the bumping over rocks and nullahs. On these I got a native carpenter to put a flat flooring and a pair of shafts. At each corner of the floor an upright, some eighteen inches high, was erected, and these were connected, except behind, by stout rails. These rails were pierced every few inches, and through each hole an iron pin, which also entered the flooring, was driven. Over this sort of cot on wheels rose an arched roof of peculiar native thatch, covered with white cloth. A tail-board fitted in behind, and white curtains, which could be lowered at the front, back, and sides to exclude the sun, were provided. It could easily be drawn by a pony or by one of the little native bullocks, which I preferred for the purpose.

It carried four greyhounds comfortably; in fact, they sometimes slept in it at night. In addition, it was always supplied with water and drinking troughs. Though not rapid in its movements, it followed along in the rear of the coursing party, carrying the pair of greyhounds which were not in the slips. After a course the tired hounds were brought back, watered, and put in the van to rest, while the other two were in their turn put in the slips. Besides serving this purpose, it was a most useful all-round luggage-cart, and proved very suitable for taking lunch out, shooting, and bringing home game.

Early in May the new hounds arrived. They were brother and sister, but the dog was a good deal the larger. Except in the head, which was coarser and more hound-like, they differed little from greyhounds

in appearance. There was, however, one notable difference; both, especially the dog, threw their tongue when hunting, and both had some little scenting powers.

It was not till the third time I had them out that we at last got blood. Three of us went out to the scene of my early discomfiture with the two jackals. In order to give them confidence I let all the hounds run together. The first hill was blank, but the second, on being beaten, produced a jack, who went straight away for the first hill, some quarter of a mile off. Away went the hounds, and away we went, my companion coming to grief over a stone wall. Just as I thought the jack was going to gain the hill, the little bitch pinned him by the leg and rolled him over. All the others then joined in, and I rode up and put an end to his struggles with a hog-spear. A jackal has no turn of speed which makes him interesting from a coursing point of view, but I was anxious to blood the hounds. A jackal will not even run well unless he gets a good start, but they generally show fight. On this occasion it was obvious that the English dogs were unwilling to come to close quarters, as, though they were far faster, they allowed one of the others to begin. A few days afterwards they killed another, but later in the day I happened to get among bad ground just as they closed with a jackal. Missing my encouragement, they let it go. Yet, shortly afterwards, they were all equal to tackling a jackal single-handed.

It would not be of interest if I were merely to reproduce such entries from my diary as the following:—

"Several good courses. Killed two hares, one

jackal, one mongoose, one porcupine."[1] (This seems to have been a varied day.)

"Several good runs, notably one with a fox. Killed four hares."

Further on I come to the following:—

"Four good courses with foxes—killed two. Good run after a gazelle. Also killed one mongoose."

This is two months after my regularly beginning, and these seem to have been the first foxes I killed. I recollect they often beat me. No doubt the reason was that they were a bit fast for the Indian dogs, and the English ones were still unwilling to attack unsupported. With regard to the gazelle, all greyhounds run them eagerly at first; but by degrees they begin to realise the hopelessness of the pursuit. A gazelle is quite safe from the fastest greyhound. Even with a leg broken it gives a very good course, not by any means odds on the dogs. Some sportsmen take them out buck-shooting for use in such cases.

Not long afterwards a curious accident happened. We had found three or four jackals together. The hounds caught one, which cried wofully. Whereupon another jackal appeared coming towards the "worry," and not till I commenced to call the hounds off to attack him did he take to his heels. I thought little of it at the time, but I have since noticed a similar incident mentioned in the papers as having occurred with an Indian pack of fox-hounds. Is it paternal or filial affection that calls the second to aid the first? Or does he take the cries for those the jackal gives vent to at night when he smells food, and which are so well known to all dwellers in hot climates?

To sum up Indian coursing, the hounds required

[1] More properly a scaly ant-eater (*Manis*).

must possess speed and courage. The English greyhound has the first, but not the second, therefore a cross is necessary. The usual cross is with a native breed, of which there are one or two suitable. A cross with a Scotch deer-hound would, I think, not be amiss, or, better still, with the Australian kangaroo hound. The jackal is not fairly matched against greyhounds at all, the natural quarry of which in India is the fox, which is useless for hunting purposes, whereas the jackal will provide a good run with fox-hounds.

III. THE COLOMBO HOUNDS AND THE KANDY BEAGLES.

The first meeting which was called together for the purpose of starting a pack of hounds in Colombo took place, I recollect, in the summer of 187—. I shall allude to it only briefly, because shortly after that meeting I left Colombo, and hardly ever saw that particular pack of hounds. They were fox-hounds, and the intention was that they should hunt the jackal. I can't say who was the authority for the statement that we should find plenty of "jacks," but the fact is there were practically none at all, and from a subsequent experience of the spicy island, extending over half a dozen years, I certainly wonder any one should have thought there were. I never saw a jackal anywhere in Ceylon, in the hills or the plains, north, south, east, or west. I have been told they exist in the extreme north, and the fact remains that the Colombo Hounds once—— But I anticipate.

As "bagmen" were afterwards procured without difficulty, jackals must exist. But they are far from being the common objects they are in India, and in the neighbourhood of the town of Colombo they must be few and far between, for I hunted there regularly with harriers and never saw a jackal. As I said before, there are no foxes in Ceylon.

The hounds arrived in due course, all the ten couple being in good health; and I may mention that, excepting one which picked up some poison, the Colombo Hunt never lost a hound.

As soon as things were got into working order they proceeded to draw for a jackal, but I believe they only once found. At all events they only had one run. They found three jackals together, and got away with one, which gave them a splendid forty-five minutes' gallop. Then the jack turned to bay, a proceeding which so astonished the hounds that they stopped. The master was first up and cheered them on; but the hounds unfortunately came towards him. Meanwhile the jackal slipped away, and they could never get on terms with him again.

After this bag-jackals were tried, but would not run; and finally the pack descended to a drag. At the beginning of the hot weather they were sold, and it was decided to replace them with harriers after the next rains.

I have already said that during this time I was absent from Colombo,—the reason being that I was for a year in the old capital of Ceylon, Kandy. The climate of Kandy is more favourable to hounds; but the country is very hilly, and much of it is covered with close jungle. The jungle contains pig

and porcupine, both of which are very dangerous to hounds.

When I arrived there I found there was a scratch pack of beagles already in existence. The *modus operandi* was as follows: The hounds were trencher-fed, one or two being kept at each sportsman's bungalow. On the days fixed for hunting, the sportsmen arrived at the meet, each with his hound or hounds, and—*his gun.* The hounds were then thrown into cover, and the sportsmen took post in various places. If a hare or "red-deer" was seen, it was promptly shot. The effect of these proceedings was that the hounds were essentially self-hunting, and sometimes one sportsman, sometimes another, carried the horn. The hunting days varied, but I regret to say Sunday was always one—being the only day the civil servants, bankers, lawyers, &c., who formed the field, could be sure of getting away. I recollect that this fact aroused the wrath of the Archdeacon, who preached at us one Sunday. But I am afraid even this didn't alter the fixture.

From the first, all my sporting feelings were opposed to the combination of shooting and hunting, which gave the hare no chance. But as I was the junior subscriber, it was difficult for me to move the whole body of members. I commenced by volunteering to hunt the hounds. The offer was gladly accepted, as it was obvious the huntsman had the least chance of getting a shot. Somewhat to their surprise, at the next and all subsequent meets I appeared without a gun. My pleasure was the hunting, and if one of the guns outside rolled over the hunted hare I only regretted the fact. But it often

happened that there were only those out whom I had converted to my ideas. Then the guns were left in the dog-carts; and by degrees we began to kill hares fairly. Having progressed so far, and got good promises of support, I called a meeting. I proposed three things: the abolition of all shooting; the keeping of the hounds in kennel—volunteering myself to find kennels; and purchase of additional hounds. After some discussion I carried all three resolutions. I had an old building at the back of my bungalow which made a capital kennel, and I soon trained a Tamil lad into a useful whipper-in.

On Christmas Day the meet was fixed at Gangarua. This is one of the oldest of Ceylon estates, which, having failed successively as a coffee and a sugar estate, was then holding out hopes of great promise in cacao. What made it especially desirable for beagles was that acres of it were planted with guinea-grass, nearly the whole being clear open going. To the north ran jungle-clad hills, while on two sides it was bounded by the great river Mahawelliganga, first of Ceylon rivers. The manager was a thorough sportsman. Unfortunately lame in his old age, he managed to see a wonderful deal of the fun in a car drawn by two trotting bullocks.

Soon after sunrise we left the bungalow, and ere long old Druid spoke to the drag. Tantara! there she goes right under Ringwood's nose, and the whole pack score to cry. She circles the grassy plain, and returning to the gardens there is a check. She has squatted, and the little hounds extend like a fan, seeking busily. A coolie has seen her stealing away by the cart-shed. It may be a fresh one, but we chance that. On the edge of the road they take

it up, but she is beat, and has squatted but little further on. I walk almost on to her, and as she bounces up Barmaid has her. "Whoo-whoop!"

Later on we find again on the edge of the jungle that covers the hill. She goes up the hill, and I fear we shall not be able to get to hounds, but on the top she turns. There she goes across the grass, looking fresh enough. She runs nearly round the estate, and again she mounts the hill. A rare hare this! Foot by foot she retraces the old line. We, who cannot possibly get through the jungle, wait below. Once more she emerges, now visibly more tired, and crosses the plain, trying by doubling to throw out the hounds. But though the sun is now hot, they stick to it manfully. For the third time she enters the jungle, but hardly are the hounds in than she doubles back, stotting slowly along, almost black with sweat. My horn is out in a second and the hounds swing round to the sound. As they break covert they view her at the bottom of the slope. Druid is first, but the old hound has got a bit slow, and Ringwood is first up. "Whoo-whoop!" I run down and take her from them. She has not been dead a minute, and yet I hold her out as stiff as a poker.

"Capital run," says our host, driving up; "just three-quarters of an hour."

"Have a pad," I answer. "All the hounds here, boy? Then whoo-whoop, worry, worry, worry!" and the hare is torn into fifty pieces.

"I'm sure they deserve her," says somebody, and we all assent.

"Now let us go and have some breakfast," says the host. What a breakfast we ate, and how we all agreed that this was the best of all possible ways

of spending Christmas Day. I still remember the bill of fare. "All killed on the estate," our host assured us:—

HARE SOUP.
FISH (name unknown, from the river).
PORCUPINE CHOPS. WILD-BOAR HAM.
"RED-DEER" VENISON. SNIPE.
PARROT CURRY.

Something like a breakfast, we said, and I think my readers will agree.

My next innovation was to suggest riding to the hounds. In fact, I had been doing so quietly for some time on by-days when nobody was out. My suggestion met with violent opposition, but I suggested that they should come out and see. The experiment took place in the lovely ride known as Lady Horton's Walk, where I knew the plentiful paths of easy gradient would enable the most timid to see the fun. It is true we could see but little of hounds, they being mostly in the thick jungle, but when they finally ran into their hare everybody was delighted; and it was decided that we should ride, except on Sundays, on which day only some of the members who had no horses could get away.

A few miles from Kandy lie the celebrated Botanical Gardens of Peradeniya. They consist largely of beautifully-kept park land, and are almost entirely surrounded by a bend of the Mahawelliganga, which here forms a complete S—the estate of Gangarua, of which I have before spoken, being in the upper half and the Botanical Gardens in the lower. I had long cast an eye on these rolling grass-lands, but had not quite the audacity to take hounds there uninvited. It so happened that at this time a new superintendent

arrived from England to take charge of the gardens. I called on him, and when he returned my call I artfully led the conversation round to hunting, and said I hoped he would let us meet at his bungalow shortly. He replied politely, but evidently was not keen on it.

What was to be done? I held council with two or three others, and we decided to write to him the day before we went. I need hardly say we well knew we should be there before his post. Accordingly one morning, to the surprise of the janitor, the Kandy hounds, attended by a small field, entered the Gardens. Alas! we were never to enjoy a spin over the park. Hardly had I entered than old Druid broke away on a fresh scent, and entering a thicket of young shrubs, disappeared from view. It was in vain to attempt to restrain the pack. The scene that follows beggars description. The Gardens must have been sanctuary for hares for years. Here were two or three hounds tearing a hare to pieces on a bed of rare seedlings, there two or three more going full cry through a fernery. Here, there, and everywhere were single hounds running separate hares. In the midst of the burly-burly the new director appeared on the scene, furious. I am sorry to say the scene so tickled my risible faculties that I was simply rolling in my saddle with laughter. Indeed it was impossible for me to hear a word for the noise of the hounds. At last I was able to explain, apologise, and generally soothe the irate botanist. He accepted my apologies, but asked me to withdraw my hounds. This was done with difficulty, and we rode on to the neighbouring sugar estate. Here we soon found, and after a good gallop returned home.

One more run, and I have done. The meet was at the Commissariat Stores, and a hare was soon afoot. After running a ring or two she went off down the road by the mosque, and into the town of Kandy. What a hubbub! More than she likes, for she turns across the new railway, up through the officers' quarters on to the parade-ground. As I arrived there this was the scene I witnessed: Half a hundred British soldiers full cry, frightening my poor little hounds off the line. Fortunately, the thick jungle chokes the men off. But the hare evidently has a love for soldiers, for turning down again she once more crosses the parade-ground, and the hounds pull her down in the corner of a barrack-room. I present her to the dwellers therein; and no doubt she goes to swell the day's ration.

When I left Kandy not long after, I had the satisfaction of handing over to my successor a perfectly efficient pack of hounds. I believe they were soon after given up, owing to nearly all the old members of the hunt leaving the station.

I returned to Colombo to find the new pack of harriers in working order. I was offered, and gladly accepted, the post of whip. We did the thing more smartly in Colombo, huntsmen and whips wearing the orthodox green frock with silver buttons. Only instead of hunting-caps we wore white helmets, for the sun was often high before we returned home.

The available hunting country at Colombo consisted mostly of cinnamon gardens, interspersed with groves of cocoa-nut trees. The cinnamon is a laurel-like plant, growing to a height of about five feet, though

sometimes it is as high as eight or nine. The gardens are drained with large main drains, into which smaller ones run at right angles, gridiron fashion. These do not form a formidable leap, but are the frequent cause of falls, as they are often overgrown with ferns and quite invisible.

I found the hounds in good working order, and showing capital sport. At first they suffered a good deal from too many hares, but later on things became better. The meets took place at ten minutes to six. As the kennels were some four miles out of town, this meant an early start for the whips. When the meet was some miles from the kennels I was frequently in the saddle at 4.20 A.M. Besides this, the cinnamon scrub was often soaking wet, and as we whips *had* to go into it, we were often wet through nearly to the waist before the hounds found. In addition to this, the cinnamon abounded with a peculiarly vicious species of red ant, whose bite is exactly like having a red-hot needle run into one, and which frequently got down our necks and up our sleeves. I do not recall any incidents particularly calling for record with these hounds, except that we once found a curious species of game. Hearing the hounds barking furiously, we rode into the scrub, and found them facing two enormous pythons. These were secured and carried home by coolies, when they were found to measure eighteen feet each.

I must now leave the Colombo hounds and come to the form of hunting which is far and away the most exciting and interesting that is followed in Ceylon.

IV. ELK-HUNTING IN THE MOUNTAINS OF CEYLON.

I naturally feel a diffidence in writing of this branch of Ceylon sport, as it has been so fully described by that best of sporting writers, Sir Samuel Baker. However, as the *Rifle and Hound in Ceylon* has now been written many years, I may be allowed to devote a few pages to this most fascinating sport, especially as my day in Ceylon was long after that of the famous trio[1] of brothers, all, alas! now long dead.

Elk-hunting in Ceylon is nearly always carried out on foot. Of late years it has been the fashion for several of the masters of crack packs to form a camp for hunting purposes in the Elk Plains or the Horton Plains, where hounds can sometimes be followed on horseback; but this is only for a week or so in the year. The sambar frequent the thick jungles, which are interspersed between the coffee estates, and commit mighty ravages in the fields of guinea-grass, which are grown for the benefit of the planters' horses and cattle. When they become too great a nuisance a drive is organised, and some are shot and the others dispersed. But if it is a district where there is a pack of hounds they afford finer sport still. Most districts possess hounds of some sort. Many of the packs are of the scratch variety, consisting of hounds crossed with the native pariah dog, terriers, &c. With such packs seizers are generally used. These are Scotch deer-hounds, or kangaroo or Rampur hounds. The pack is then used to drive the deer to the open,

[1] Samuel, Valentine, and John Baker.

where the seizers are slipped at him. Their speed and size force him to the water, where he is speedily despatched.

There are, however, several crack packs, consisting entirely of English fox-hounds, with whom the chase is carried on exactly as it is on Exmoor, except that "tufters" are not used, as the sportsmen being on foot, they could not be stopped. It is hardly necessary to say that such packs are only found in the possession of wealthy planters. The cost of transport of hounds from England is more than that of the hounds themselves, say ten pounds a couple. Hounds are not long-lived in Ceylon; the wet jungle and the hot sun soon bring on liver disease, and many fall victims to the panther or wild boar, and even to the elk himself. So, independent of feeding, the cost of hounds is considerable.

Again it is Christmas Day—a year previous to the one I have before mentioned. I am a guest of a sporting planter, well known on the Ceylon turf and in the Blackmore Vale. My host, F——, arouses me while it is still dark, and I hastily dress myself. Tea despatched, I go to the kennel with him. Six or seven couple of fox-hounds are the occupants. One is picked out as lame, and another as "seedy." These are shut up, and the rest are let out and bound round us. A rate and a crack of the whip reduces them to order, and we start for an adjoining hill, meeting on the way a couple of neighbouring planters.

The covert to be drawn is situated on the shoulder of a bare peak, the very name of which I have forgotten. The hounds dash into cover, F—— follows them, and I am left looking at the glorious scene. The mist fills the hollows, and the peaks rise like

islands in a grey sea. Gradually the rising sun disperses the mist and the deep valleys come into view, till at last I see the town and lake of Kandy, nearly three thousand feet below.

But hark! a challenge interrupts my thoughts, and soon it is taken up by various hounds, and the chorus swells. At first it comes towards me, and then I hear a crash below, followed by a loud "Tally-ho, away!" from F——. The hounds fly to his voice, and I tear down the hill, catching sight only of a couple of forms bounding on below me. A slight turn lets me in.

"A stag?" I inquire.

"Yes, a big one." But we want all our wind to follow. Down, down we go. We cross the Kandy road, and the jungle gets thicker and the cry of hounds fainter. At last I get into an awful place. The lantana is literally so thick that I am some feet from the ground, and even my weight no longer enables me to divide the thorny branches. I have to get out my hunting-knife and cut my way through. Even then it takes me some twenty minutes, and when I emerge, all signs of the chase have disappeared. There is nothing for it but to return to the bungalow. On my way I overtake one of the field, an elderly planter, who has been choked off before myself.

"Heaven knows where they've gone," says he. "This is a desperate side of the district for hunting."

We return to the bungalow, and I find the coolie with my box has started for Kandy, where I had promised to breakfast. So I must ride down as I am, although my clothes are rather ragged from the morning's work. Before F——'s horse is

saddled for me the other planter turns up, also having lost the hounds.

"F—— is sure to find them," he says, "he knows so well where the elk run here."

But before I am a mile on my road I meet the Master, also disconsolate.

"They've beat me this time. I have been to two or three water-courses, but can't hear or see anything. I'm going to get my pony and try some other places. Good-bye, sorry you hadn't more fun."

Just as I reach the town of Kandy, I become aware of an excitement. Close to the railway station and behind the new gaol is a shallow pond. This pond is now surrounded by excited natives, and I hear the dogs barking.

"*Dorai*," says the groom, who is running at my horse's heels, "*dorai, koota, koota.*" (Sir, the hounds, the hounds.)

I ride hastily forwards.

Yes, there are the hounds, sure enough, within the circle of natives. There, too, little more than knee-deep in the pool, stands a splendid stag sambar facing the baying pack. To jump off my horse and whip out my hunting-knife, at the same time pushing through the crowd of chattering natives, is the work of a moment. On the edge I pause. It is not exactly a pleasant matter to despatch the elk. His horns are very serviceable-looking, and the depth of the water is not great enough to impede his movements. I wade cautiously in, rather behind than in front of him, but looking out cautiously for a kick. The danger of this particular "stick" consists in the fact that the stag has long since recovered his wind, and is

in full possession of his senses and activity. Aroused by my arrival the hounds redouble their attacks, which are mostly vocal. However, they distract him for a minute. I run hastily in, and seizing the base of the left antler, thrust my knife, edge uppermost, into the broad chest. A swing of his head sends me flying and staggering, almost on my back, half across the pond. But the knife has gone home, as the low bellow of pain and wrath attests. The smell of the blood excites the hounds, who can hardly be restrained from dashing on the spear-pointed horns. Slowly the stag's strength leaves him, his knees bend and he is down. We drag him to shore, and there and then, to the accompaniment of St Paul's Church bells, he is gralloched, and the offal thrown to the eager pack. My next proceeding is to have the stag taken to the friend's house to which I am bound, where the pack are shut up till F—— can send for them.

The danger of tackling an unwounded stag with a knife is considerable, especially if the wielder of the weapon does not understand what he is about. Not long before the incidents I am relating a young Englishman, new to Ceylon, met his death from this cause. The deer—it was a hind—was "set up" in somewhat shallow water. As he went in to knife it the deer broke bay, and as he was in the act of using his knife *overhand*, like a dagger, it was forced into his own chest, causing almost instantaneous death. A knife should invariably be used *underhand* with the edge uppermost. It is hardly necessary for me to say that the knife on which one's life may depend should *never* be used for any other purpose than that for which it is made. It should be kept as

sharp as a razor, and if not one of the finest workmanship, should be of iron. An old file makes an excellent *couteau-de-chasse*. Inferior steel is worse than useless. The way to test a knife is to drive it through a penny; if it will not stand this it is useless. As the following anecdote will prove, English hunting-knives, though bearing well-known Sheffield names, are not to be relied upon always.

One morning F—— and I were out with his hounds. They soon found, but to our disgust, before they had run far, their cry turned to furious barking, interspersed with doleful yellings, which left no doubt as to the nature of the game. We hurried towards them.

On arriving on the scene we found the boar—for such we had rightly concluded it to be—had taken refuge in a thicket of dense lantana jungle, where we could hardly see him. What was worse, we could not possibly get to him, the only openings being a couple of game runs not two feet high. Meanwhile F—— was nearly distracted with fear for his hounds, which were, no doubt, getting sadly mauled. At last we decided that I should take the spear F——'s dog-boy carried, and crawling in on the path behind him endeavour to make him break bay. F—— stationed himself by the only other exit. At first I got along on hands and knees, but soon the thorns were too low for that, and I had to lie flat on the ground. I must own that I did not like the situation. Supposing the pig had changed position, and was facing me. He would most likely charge me, and, prostrate as I was, I could hardly hope to stop him. However, fortune favoured me, and I soon saw his broad quarters turned towards me. Raising myself silently, I drove the spear into them with all my force. He at once broke

bay, passing close by F——, who, jumping on one side, brought his knife down with all his force. He was a little too quick, and the knife, taking the boar right between the eyes, shivered like glass, although, as we afterwards found, the point penetrated the skull. Fortunately, the boar disregarded the now defenceless F——, and, closely followed by the hounds, turned to bay again some fifty yards on with his quarters to a tree. F—— got behind it and drove the spear nearly through him, enabling me to finish him with my knife.

We had now to count casualties. One hound lay dead, his heart and lungs exposed to view. Another —a draft, by the way, from the Colombo pack—was laid open from shoulder to thigh, but afterwards recovered. The leg of a fox-terrier was hanging by little more than the skin, and, though she recovered, it was only to be lame for life.

The boar was a monster. After the hounds had eaten a good deal of him and he had been cleaned, he still weighed three hundred pounds. He must therefore have been equal to the largest European boars.

This episode is perhaps hardly elk-hunting. But it is one which may be encountered any day when looking for elk, and therefore, I think, admissible in this chapter.

V. THE RAJPUTANA HOUNDS.

My last winter in India was approaching, and I had never seen fox-hounds at work in that country. The station where I was living was not altogether suitable

to hunting, as there were many rocky cactus-covered hills, which doubtless would carry little scent, and much open sandy plain.

In the month of September I was at Bombay on leave, when I happened to hear of a small pack of fox-hounds for sale not far away. They were the remains of half the Bombay pack of the previous year,[1] and had been bought and hunted by the inhabitants of a small station to the south. Now the rains were at an end they were useless to them, and they were for sale. I telegraphed an offer, which was accepted, and the hounds were sent to me. On my return from Bombay I took them home with me. They consisted entirely of dog-hounds of rather different shapes and sizes, but in good health and serviceable enough.

When I returned home I had a kennel improvised out of a coach-house with an adjoining yard. Instead of benches there were charpoys or native bedsteads, covered with cocoa-nut fibre. When the weather got cold plenty of straw was added. As my system of kennel answered admirably, I propose to give it for the information of any who may be keeping, or intending to keep, hounds in tropical climates.

The hounds were fed twice a-day on returning from exercise or hunting. The food was Indian meal (maize) with soup poured over it. In every fifth meal, however, rice was substituted for meal. Except on hunting days, every hound was thoroughly brushed and hand-rubbed after his morning and before his evening exercise. Castor-oil was freely used when required, and in case of fever the temperature was

[1] The Bombay Hunt has a new pack out from England each year.

lowered with small doses of tartar-emetic, after which quinine was freely administered. Above all, the hounds were never exposed to the rays of the sun between 9 A.M. and 4 P.M. A covered van, rather larger than that mentioned before, was used to take them out and bring them home. It is my belief that by following this system hounds can be kept in India in good condition for some years, provided that they are sent to the hills from April to September. There is an idea that hounds lose their scenting powers in India, but I believe it to be unfounded. Mine had been out a few years all but some months, and their scent was quite normal. I should advise any one who feels inclined to go in for hounds in India to keep a sharp look-out among the natives' dogs. Some very hound-like animals can be picked up, and these crossed with the fox-hound and then crossed back again, should produce useful hounds that would stand the climate well.

After some preliminary exercise and drilling, my dog-boy to act as a whipper-in, I felt ready to try a by-day. Accordingly on the 8th of October, I proceeded to draw some patches of cotton within a mile of my house. The cotton-fields are the best of all coverts in the Indian plains. They are artificially irrigated, and consequently the damp soil generally carries a scent and enables hounds to get away on good terms with their jack. Again, they are generally not more than an acre or two in extent, which enables the huntsman to see the jackal break away. On this occasion hounds found in a very small patch. The cotton usually being about thirty inches high, it is a very pretty sight to see hounds running in covert, the waving sterns, and now and

then a head, being generally all that is to be seen. The jack slipped away into an adjoining patch, and then into a *nullah* (water-course), and thus got away without being viewed. Seeing the leading hounds carry a line out of the cotton, I got out my horn, and was delighted to find the pack very handy. They literally flew to the horn, and settling down, raced across the open. In ten minutes they ran into the jack, which was a half-grown cub. I was delighted with this result, for many old hands had said that fox-hounds would never do any good in Rajputana.

But I had yet to learn that unaccountable as scent is in England, it is even more so in India. "Oh, that weary scent," exclaims the immortal Jorrocks in his second lecture on hunting, "that weary, incomprehensible, incontrollable phenomenon. 'Constant only in its inconstancy,' as the able hauthor of the noble science well said. Believe me my beloved 'earers, there's nothing so queer as scent, 'cept a woman."[1] But incomprehensible as scent is in England, it is infinitely more so in India. In England there are certain conditions of weather which we feel sure will affect scent in a certain way. For instance, who ever knew a good scent go with a falling barometer? How rarely, again, scent is bad on a "reasonable" day. But India has hardly any variations of climate, and the only atmospheric effect I ever noticed there was that scent was invariably bad when the ground was damp after a shower, when it might be expected to be best. I have known hounds run at top speed for half an hour, and then check; and not by the most patient

[1] *Handley Cross*, chap. xxxiii. p. 267, original edition.

endeavours could I ever induce one hound to own the line again.

The next two evenings I went out I experienced a total want of scent, so I determined to try a morning. Accordingly the van was sent on to a village some four miles off, where there was a very large acreage of cotton. Hounds soon found, but it was impossible for a long time to get the jack to face the open. At last he did, and ran into a network of sandy nullahs, where scent failed altogether. After thirty-five minutes' work this was rather hard on hounds. I crossed the road and found again at five minutes before eight. Although, or perhaps because, the sun had got stronger, scent had improved. Hounds ran from scent to view and rolled him over at half-past eight. I may here remark that I had often afterwards cause to notice that scent in India generally improves as the sun gets hotter, for which reason I always found that my best runs took place in the afternoon, after the ground had been exposed to the scorching rays.

The 26th of October was a bitter cold morning. I was in the saddle before daylight, and had to wait some time till I could see to draw. Consequently I experienced the extraordinary sensation (for India) of feeling my hands quite numb with cold, though I had gloves on. Scent was bad, and though they found twice we had no run. This day was only noteworthy as being that on which I killed my only fox. I happened to see the fox—a desert one—crossing the plain a couple of hundred yards away, and galloped on till hounds got a view. They never lost sight of him, and in some ten minutes killed him.

Four days later came "the run of the season." After several blank draws I put hounds into a large cotton-field, and almost before they spoke to him a jackal went away at the far side. Hounds came to my horn and went away at a great pace, so much so that I had to push my Arab along to live with them. The slower hounds tailed shamefully, but there was nobody to see. At the end of eleven minutes they checked, but I was fortunate enough to hit it off at once by casting on. They soon settled down again, and the pace, though not so very great, remained fast. At last they checked again, having now been running three-quarters of an hour. As it was just on dark, and my native whip was nowhere to be seen, I stopped them. The distance, measured between the two villages, close to which the find and last check respectively took place, was exactly five miles in a straight line; but of course hounds ran a good deal more. I may add that some weeks later I found in the same covert. The jack broke in exactly the same place, heading in the same direction. Although the atmospheric conditions were exactly similar, hounds, who got away on good terms with him, literally could not run a yard.

During November and December sport continued good, but as it is my object to give my readers a general idea of the sport rather than a series of accounts of runs, I will not draw further on my diary. Moreover, some of the runs were described in *The Field* at the time. At last the day came when the regiment had to commence its long march to the other side of India. I had arranged for the continuance of the Hunt in the country, but my favourites were to follow the horn of another. It

was with feelings of regret I got into the dog-cart to drive to the last meet.

For some time we did not find. At last a jack went away from a small cotton patch. I tallied him away, but as hounds came towards me another broke, and they got away in view with the second. For some time they raced him, till, seeing he was likely to get into some cactus-covered rocks, I pushed my horse along and headed him off towards the plain. His heart failed him then, and ere many more minutes had passed Barrister had him by the back—Whoo-whoop!

CHAPTER XXIII.

ACROSS BOSNIA.

A FEW months after the trip described in chapter xix., I was honoured with an invitation to confer with the executive officers of the Government of Bosnia-Herzegovina as to the disposal of the immense tracts in those provinces which have now been game-sanctuaries for over twenty years, and as to other points, such as effective game preservation, and the bringing to the knowledge of English sportsmen this very superior shooting-ground. In accordance with this invitation I went to Vienna, and there it was arranged that I should make a personal inspection of the game reserves in Bosnia, those in the Herzegovina being already familiar ground to me. A domestic bereavement made it impossible for me to go at that season (April), even if it had been well suited for the purpose, which it was not.

On the first of July, however, I left London, and for the only time for many years I allowed myself to be seduced from my allegiance to the Hook of Holland route, and into taking a Dutch steamer instead of an English. The result might have been disastrous, for, the weather being thick, I was

suddenly disturbed from the quiet perusal of a book in the saloon, by a violent shock and crash of an unmistakable nature. Having pacified some terrified lady-passengers, I ran on deck, just in time to see an iron sailing barque of some thousand tons disappearing into the fog. I was not too late, however, to notice a gaping rent just forward of her port-quarter, extending at least eight or ten feet above the water-line, and also her skipper standing on a heap of deck lumber, and shouting "We're sinking! We're sinking!"

Then the white fog-wreaths closed in on her. For a quarter of an hour we lay there, feeling very unhappy about them, for the damage to our own steamer was superficial. At last the fog lifted again, and there she was still. A boat was sent to her, when it turned out that the alarm had been somewhat needless, for the damage was all well above water. The day being quite calm we could safely leave her to find her way to the nearest port, and did so. Then our Dutch skipper turned to us, and said, "Gentlemen, I call you all to witness that I was steaming dead slow."

This was pretty good, considering that he had never slowed down a single revolution from the minute he got clear of his English harbour. For obvious reasons I omit the name of his company, but in future I sail, when possible, under the Union Jack. I travelled on leisurely, spending a day each at Vienna and Budapest, and reached Sarajevo, the Bosnian capital, on the 5th.

I do not propose to describe my journeyings at full length, so I will merely say that, after a couple of days in the capital, I left with an *Ober-förster* who

had been detailed to accompany me, and drove seventy-five miles to Foča, sleeping one night at Plača on the way. At Foča our party was increased by the local *Forstverwalter*, or forest official, who was to accompany us round his district. Both he and his superior before mentioned were excellent travelling companions, and the best of company.

Horses had been hired at Foča for us, and we left next day early. Nevertheless, darkness found us wearily climbing an ascent of 3000 feet, by a track which consisted mainly of loose rocks, and which wound, though I could not see it then, along the edges of terrific precipices. Nothing, fortunately, seems to come amiss to a Bosnian horse, and at last we reached the Shelter Hut on the Vučevo Mountain —four wooden walls with a wooden guard-bed running along each side. The worst of it was that our dinner was on the pack-horse, and the pack-horse, with the retired brigand [1] in charge of him, was miles behind. At last they came, but it was eleven o'clock before we sought our couches of sweet-smelling hay.

To show me the head of the game in the district the foresters had arranged a series of drives. We began next morning, I being posted on a rock that ran out towards the Drina Valley, whilst the men drove the tremendous cliffs through which our road (?) of the previous night wound. The morning was fine and hot, and the view over the valley magnificent. I had a rifle with me, but only for the off-chance of bear or wolf, and it was not likely ground for either. Within ten minutes I saw one buck chamois within easy shot, and later on I heard a number of others, which passed up towards my companions, who counted

[1] Literally true.

sixteen, and also one roebuck. In a second drive we saw another, and the men reported that all the game was breaking downwards. The cause for this lay in the fact that the upland pastures are at this season full of cattle and those looking after them,—a fact which the game know and profit by. So we decided to go on, and, skirting the Montenegrin frontier, put up at the Tjentiste Customs Barrack that night.

Next day we had a drive or two south of this, and had no less than sixty chamois in one beat. Coming back the way we had gone, we came on the fresh tracks of an enormous bear which had not been there in the morning. But, alas! in these immense forests there was little hope of seeing him again, although I was told two cows had recently been killed in the nearest village. Anyhow, my time did not admit of special bear-drives. We had some more drives in the neighbourhood next morning, but only chamois were forthcoming; so after eating our lunch we rode on through miles and miles of primæval forest, finally climbing to a height of 6600 feet at the Blockhouse at Prievor. This Gendarmerie Barrack is only occupied during the summer. Snow was still lying quite near us here, and that night (July 12th) there was a sharp frost. We turned out early, and with the glass counted fifty chamois feeding across the ravine. Then we rode on to Suha, in the beautiful Sutjeska Valley. After lunch at the Gendarmerie Barracks we amused ourselves watching the chamois, of which the opposite cliffs were full. They fed quietly within a hundred yards, and a shout hardly moved them. I watched one old doe with abnormally long horns for nearly an hour, and she literally disregarded my presence.

The following morning was wet, and this was a

nuisance, as we had to bivouac at the next place we were to visit. It cleared up, however, at about eleven, and by three we reached our camping-ground in the Hrčava Valley. The first thing we did here was to set two Turks to catch trout, which, fishing in the most primitive way, they did without any difficulty, getting eight pounds in an hour and a half. In the meantime the Mukhtar, or headman of the village, which had its summer huts near at hand, had brought us such luxuries as he had to offer. In the past he had been a noted hunter, having actually once killed a bear with a knife after following it for seventy-five hours. Now, however, he was fast dying from consumption. He gave us a good account of the chamois in his district, and I decided to try for one next day, the desire to "go and kill something" having become irresistible. A screen of beech boughs having been erected at one side of us, we turned in on our beds of hay, and slept the sleep of the just.

Next morning I donned an old stalking kilt, which rather "astonished the natives," and taking the ·400 I had used at Antimilo, in preference to a new and untried double, I started off on a two hours' climb. The hills in this neighbourhood are very steep, and the ground is eminently suited to chamois.

The programme for the day was moving the game with a few beaters. I was posted on a peak of rock covering a deep gorge below. The sun was warm, and I twice went to sleep—and nearly fell over. I saw some chamois on the move, but far away, and not coming in my direction, and I began to despair. At last my guide began to signal me to move towards him, and I heard stones rolling down in the gorge. Presently several chamois appeared, working upwards

and across the valley. The range was about a hundred and forty yards, but as they were only moving slowly I took a stern shot at the best. He gave a tremendous bound, and, before he had gone many yards, he sat down in attempting to ascend a rock, and then rolled over the edge. I sent my Turk down for him, but it proved rather a difficult business, the Bosnian chamois, in the words of the song, being "All very fine and large." So I had a tedious wait till the beast was pulled up and gralloched. The bullet had gone almost right through the animal from end to end, as I found it under the skin of the throat.

We now moved off homewards, and in less than half an hour we came right on a single chamois feeding in an open glade in the forest. Though only some hundred and fifty yards away he quietly looked at us and went on feeding. This "raised my dander some," as the Americans say, so I dropped on my knee and plumped a bullet into him, thus rudely awakening him to the realities of life. He struggled up, and out of the glade into the thicket, followed by all my Turks in full cry, and shortly after I reached camp myself they brought him in.

These two bucks, which I may almost claim to have bagged right and left (they fell to two consecutive shots from a single rifle), proved to be very similar in head—nice thick horns about $10\frac{1}{4}$ inches long, and taken together a trophy well above the average. In the evening, and again next morning, we watched herds of chamois on the various peaks surrounding our bivouac. Then we rode off in the rain, and climbed the Orufa mountain, on whose slopes the wild pig had everywhere been rooting, to the summer Gendarmerie post of Ljubingrieb, where we dried

ourselves and lunched, afterwards riding on to the similar barrack on the Zelenagora, or Green Mountain. Next day we went to the Radomisla plateau. As we skirted a lake below it we saw a herd of chamois feeding on the cliffs just above, so at the end of our ride, finding the place was handy to our bivouac, I took my rifle and went to look after them. An easy stalk brought me close up, but I could find nothing but does and youngsters, and consequently went back to dinner without firing a shot. The night was wet, but we managed a comfortable bivouac, and next morning had a couple of drives in the hope of a bear, whose fresh traces I had seen the night before. Nothing was forthcoming, however, but roe, chamois, hazel-grouse, and capercalzie, which were allowed to pass unfired at. Then we rode down to the town of Jeleć, where I dropped one forester, and on the next day to Kalinovik, where the other also left me, to go on alone to Bjelemić, where I slept. The next day I lunched at Glavatičevo, where I had been some months in camp a couple of years before, and reached the villa at Borke Lake in the afternoon. Its owner, a nobleman high up in the Bosnian service, was celebrating the anniversary of the battle of Lissa, in which he had played no unimportant part, and we drank to the health of the gallant Tegethoff and his brave tars.

The reserve round Borke, which I did not then examine, as I already knew it, is the first which the Bosnian Government has thrown into the market at the modest rent of Fl. 500 (£42). It is of large extent, well stocked with chamois, roe, and small game, and should yield a bear or two annually. At this very time damage to cattle by bears had been

reported, but I could not wait for the drive that took place the following week.

After two days rest at this delightful country-house, I started again, and completed my journey right across Bosnia, reaching Livno, a small town close to Dalmatia, on the night of the 25th of July. The local forester had me up at one o'clock next morning, and we started at two in a springless ladder waggon. This cart took us as far as it could go, to the foot of the detached range known as the Kameśnica, where horses were waiting. Then we rode as far as they could go also, and then started climbing. A first short beat was blank, and then we scrambled on to a higher ridge. It was very hot, and, leaving the forester on guard, I went to sleep. Before long the shouts of the beaters woke me, and I at once saw a chamois, which he had not noticed, standing in some scrub about four hundred yards away. Putting my glass on the spot I made out another, and also a kid. They soon bolted off upwards, when I also saw a second kid. As we had a man above they were bound to come to me, and did. Indeed I am inclined to think if I had not shown myself intentionally they would have come right over me, and as it was, they were not five yards away.

These chamois are interesting as being a completely detached and isolated herd. My inspection of them (there was but one more—a crippled doe—in the beat) convinced me they were fast approaching extermination, and I am glad to think that in consequence of my representations the Kameśnica range has now been made a sanctuary. Unfortunately it is exposed to the raids of Dalmatian poachers, who care little for the Bosnian game-laws. These chamois, being so

much inbred, are smaller than the other Bosnian ones.

This was the last I saw of chamois on this occasion. I should, no doubt, have seen more in the Busovača reserve north of Sarajevo; but when I reached it I was unwell, and consequently unable to do it justice.

From Livno I went on to the Glamoć district, and found things in a very bad state, the forest staff being all rank poachers. I am glad to know that, in consequence of my report, this entire district has been made into a sanctuary, but *quis custodiet ipsos custodes?*

I had good hopes of a bear here, but the local forester had only just previously killed one and wounded another, and all I saw was the fresh blood of the latter at a water-hole where the poor brute had gone to drink. At Mliniste, farther north, the keeper had recently missed no less than four; but I saw nothing but roe, and picked out several nice bucks.

From Mliniste I made a long ride to Jaiće, where I struck the railway again. This road lies through miles of untouched forest, a regular stronghold for bears, but the getting a shot in such ground must always be a matter of luck.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE CALPE HUNT.

I SHOULD, I think, begin by saying that of the Calpe Hunt *fin de siècle* I am not in a position to speak. My recollections of Gibraltar date from the seventies, and many changes may have taken place since those days. One I know has, and that is that the extent of cultivated ground—or, in other words, prohibited ground—in the vicinity of the "Rock" has greatly increased of late years, and this is, of course, very prejudicial to sport. The Huntsman, too, has changed, and that the Master and Whips have goes without saying, these latter officials being officers of the garrison, and therefore having perforce changed some dozen times at least.[1]

Among the regular *habitués* of the Hunt death has been busy. Probably the best-known figure at a Calpe meet which he has removed was the one who was known to all Rock sportsmen as "Jorrocks." The nickname fitted him in his enthusiasm for sport, and the apparent incongruity of his occupation therewith, but not in his personal appearance. Nothing could have been less like the smug, podgy grocer that Leech's pencil had immortalised, than the rather raw-

[1] It is now in civilian hands, but the whippers-in are still officers of the garrison.

boned, tall figure of the Gibraltar Jorrocks. He wore a full beard, too, bushy and unkempt. A weather-beaten pink, hunting-cap, and brown tops were the leading features of his hunting costume, and stuck into one of these latter he always carried a huge knife, for what reason I cannot say. At this time his invariable mount was a raw-boned liver chestnut. I believe his name was Holmes, and that he was employed in the Gibraltar gasworks. Peace be to his ashes! If he died at the Rock, he now lies appropriately enough in the only cemetery I know, which is encircled by a racecourse and within earshot of the kennels.

A meet of the Calpe Hounds did not differ very greatly from that of many provincial English packs. There were only a few "pinks," more black, and a good deal of nondescript attire. The horses used were small, averaging about fifteen hands, Barbs and Spanish, and mostly stallions. My stud was very small in those days, and I generally fell back at least one day a-week on the hack-hunters of the place. One of the best of these was a broken-kneed bay, "Jack-o'-Lantern." Then there was another which nobody else had patience to ride. This was a little bay—a very good hunter, but cursed with more than mule-like obstinacy. I generally managed to get him as far as the main road, where he would stop. Flogging and spurring was no use; he only acknowledged such attentions by sullen kicks. All I could do was to get his quarters against a wall so that he couldn't jib, and wait patiently till some other sportsman passed on his way to the meet. Then he would follow steadily enough, and no man could want a better mount, *as long as he did not offer to leave the*

hounds and come home. This proceeding only resulted in more jibbing and kicking.

Two officials were always to be seen at the Calpe meets, whom one does not see elsewhere—the pick and crowbar brigade. This consisted of an old Englishman—an army pensioner I believe—and a Spaniard. They were mounted on mules, and each carried a fox-terrier in his arms. Their animals were hung all round with implements for digging out the fox — spades, crowbars, pick-axes, and tongs. The Englishman, clad in an old huntsman's frock, breeches, and gaiters, might have passed as an earth-stopper at home.

It was the Spaniard whose appearance always provoked a smile. Attired as he was in a sombrero and mantle, he looked so entirely out of keeping with his surroundings. The grave, Donnish face added to the incongruity. The necessity for these men lay, of course, in the impossibility of stopping a country almost entirely consisting of rocky hills. In the same way the Dartmoor Hounds have a terrier-boy, who carries a couple of terriers in saddle-bags for use among the rocky tors of that wild district. At Gibraltar, where a straightaway run and a kill in the open are equally the exception, it was unusual not to be able to summon these officials to extract the quarry from his refuge.

The hunting country at Gibraltar may be divided roughly into two kinds. It is hardly necessary to say that in English territory there is no room for hunting. Consequently the sport begins about two miles out, at the hill known as the Queen of Spain's Chair. From this to north and east stretches a long

series of wild rocky ranges, the going becoming worse the farther north one goes. To the north of west, however, it is different. There an hour's ride brings one into the first of a long series of cork-forests, and in those districts the hunting is not unlike woodland sport at home.

It goes without saying that the country I have described is practically unfenced. It must not, however, be supposed on that account that the riding is free from danger. To live with hounds one must ride up and down those sort of places which are often described "as steep as the side of a house." The best going may be a mule or a goat track—the worst a Titanic pile of loose rocks. Down these the clever little horses of the country go easily, slipping down here, jumping there, or bucking over a big rock. But an attempt to guide them is sure to result in a fall. To a new-comer the place seems awful, in a fortnight it seems nothing. I once overheard one man in a newly-landed regiment remark to another, "Just look how that fellow rides!" The fellow was myself; for hounds, having just found, I was going best pace through a covert of high broom, interspersed with huge rocks. In about a week the speaker had learnt equal confidence in his mount.

Clever as the horses are, it must not be supposed that serious falls do not happen. In fact, at the period I speak of the Huntsman, Payne, had a tremendous crumpler, breaking several bones. From the very nature of things it follows that such falls are serious, as they very often result in horse and man rolling down half a hillside. The Higueron

country, north-eastwards from the Rock, is perhaps the most unrideable of all, and those meets are always the worst attended. Taking it all in all, it is probably the roughest "country" in the world. The only thing I know that will at all compare with it is that which one meets with pig-sticking sometimes in India, and this latter has the further drawback that you must go top speed all the way.

Fences there are here and there, nevertheless, generally made by heaping up thorns and interlacing cactus. The newly-landed subaltern generally makes a point of putting his horse at the first of these he sees. Instead, however, of the good-humoured approval "larking" meets with at home, he is met with yells of horror from the field. "Come back! Cultivation!" is the cry. These little fences mean that the brown earth the other side has been ploughed, and as the not very wealthy Hunt has to pay for every footmark on these, they are even more carefully guarded than wheat or seeds in England. Nay, more, the Spanish cultivator is quite likely to take the law into his own hands. I recollect one summer evening, when two of us were larking over a loose stone-wall near the sea, a Spanish peasant shouting to us to desist. But not only did he not wait to see if we stopped, which we did, but rushing into the house, returned with his *escopeta* or blunderbuss, the sight of which effectually sent us galloping off. As a rule, however, the Spaniards are fairly tolerant of the Hunt, though I have known them bring a shot fox to the covert-side in triumph. Stories of violence were, however, already of ancient date in my day, though, more as a matter of tradition than otherwise, we generally carried heavy brass-handled hunting-crops.

The Spaniard's appreciation of the sport is well summed up in the oft-quoted lines:—

"Th' unwonted sight the Spanish hind amazes,
And loud he cries, '*Que locos los Inglesos!*'"[1]

In my day the only danger was from the *Guarda Costas*, or Coast-Guard, who were much too ready to "shoot on sight." One of the Spanish Regulations was that all persons should pass their lines at a walk. The reason of this was obviously to prevent smuggling; but this did not prevent one of them from sending a bullet whistling after a brother officer of mine, who was hurrying home to save being locked out. His red coat must have ensured their knowing who he was.

This gate question was one of the nuisances of Gibraltar hunting. The gates of the Rock are all locked at evening gun-fire. When, however, the hounds are not back at kennels the ceremony is deferred till they arrive. If, however, you have lost your way, or lamed your horse and cannot return with them, no power will suffice to open the gates that night; and unless you happen to have hospitable acquaintance at the Musketry Camp on the North Front, you are likely to fare badly.

From the very nature of things Gibraltar memories do not contain those of many red-letter days, most of the runs being short spins, or ringing ones. I do, however, recollect one day when we had a really first-rate gallop, and what is more, it followed another very fair run the same day.

The meet was at the Second Venta, or in other words in the Cork Wood Country. Before we had

[1] What lunatics the English are.

drawn much of the cork wood we found our first fox in a marshy bottom. For about an hour they rattled him about the woodlands at a fair hunting pace, till they finally pulled him down in the nearest approach to the open that one gets in that district, in the presence of most of the field. This was quite a pleasant run for the ladies and other easy-going members of the hunt, for they were able to keep with hounds all the way.

A long draw followed; but mile after mile of country proved blank. A good many people had gone home convinced that we had had our day's sport, when all of a sudden I came over a ridge into a steep valley just in time to see the sterns of the pack, which was drawing the opposite brow, all go up together. I was convinced it was a find though I had not heard a sound, and sent old "Jack-o'-Lantern" along as hard as he could lay legs to the ground.

I was right. When I reached the further ridge I caught sight of the pack driving silently along the side of a long hill at right angles to my course. I bore to the left, and pressed on. For over twenty minutes we ran so, hounds strung out along the opposite hill, and the small field (for most were slipped at the start) on this side of the valley.

"There's an earth just on there," said the Master, and I expected the end of our gallop, which had been fast. But no, hounds pushed on harder than ever, and we settled down to ride. Choosing one's own line is not easy there, but in a quarter of an hour we were pretty well scattered. I had a flying glimpse of San Roque, lying far below to the right, which was my only guide to our whereabouts. Meanwhile the going got worse. I was following our first whip,

Luxford of the Welsh Fusiliers, for there was only one track of any kind where even a Spanish horse could go.

"Take your own line, do," he shouted back.

He was right, for the fall of one would have brought us both down; but where else could a horse go? So I pulled back a couple of lengths. Presently he crossed the bottom to the right, and I, seeing a slight track before me, kept straight on.

My track, unfortunately, soon disappeared, and the going became truly awful. At last I had to turn uphill on a ridge, and presently was confronted by a huge rock, perhaps some three feet out of the ground. I crammed "Jack-o'-Lantern" at it, but the horse was too blown for the up-leap. His feet slipped on the rock, the hind legs went from under him, and I felt him coming back on me. By great good fortune he fell towards the hill, and still more luckily I landed in a large gorse-bush—soft if prickly. Having rolled me well into it, my unlucky steed proceeded to turn over himself, and finally brought up in the bottom some dozen feet below. Both of us were soon up again, and a hasty look round having convinced me that there was no other place, I made for the rock again. A vigorous dig of the spurs resulted in a successful, if rather slithering, effort.

A few minutes more brought us to the edge of the tableland just as the Master and second Whip appeared at the other edge, riding towards me. Hounds had evidently circled towards me, but where were they? A bay and some growling solved the question. Their fox had got to ground at the bottom of a deep hollow between us, the said hollow hiding them from our sight.

"Whoo-whoop! Whoo-whoop!"

A minute brought up the rest of the field—seven in all.

"Where are we?" asked somebody.

"Why, this is close to the Higueron!" was the answer.

An eight-mile point—some minutes under the three-quarters of an hour. Good enough for the Shires!

Yes, there, not far below us, lay the Mediterranean. Our run had taken us almost from sea to sea. Of course there was no chance of realising our fox. The pick and crowbar brigade were many a mile away. All we could think of was the way home. The mid-winter day was drawing to a close. We made for the first tower on the eastern beach. From thence it was plain sailing. *El Cuerpo*[1] lay before us, sharply outlined against the evening sky.

[1] The Corpse—the Spanish name for the Rock of Gibraltar.

CHAPTER XXV.

IBEX-STALKING IN ANTIMILO.

THE determination to revisit Antimilo, expressed at the end of chapter xix., proved impossible of execution in the winter which followed my first trip, but my hopes were realised in the next season. Moreover, this time I was fortunate enough to have a companion whose initials, P. B. V., will enable big-game shooters in most parts of the world to recognise him, and who, three years later, abandoned a projected expedition against the giant sheep of the Altai for the more exciting game of war, and went out to South Africa to join "Roberts' Horse."

V. was about to proceed to India to take part in the Maharajah of Kuch Behar's royal shooting party, and subsequently to the Himalayas on his own account, and agreed to devote a month *en route* to the game of Greece in the shape of the ibex of Antimilo and Joura, and the fallow deer on the shores of the Adramyttian Gulf.[1] By this arrangement I had the advantage of the use of his tents and camp gear, which he had already despatched to Marseilles. By so doing he had, to a certain extent, pledged himself to the French route, and as my invariable rule in the

[1] See Appendix B.

Eastern Mediterranean is to travel by the steamers of the Austrian Lloyd Company, having always found them in every way excellent, we gave each other a rendezvous at the Piræus for Monday, December 4, and went our several ways. I personally adopted my usual plan of travelling by Harwich and Rotterdam, thus obtaining a good passage and a comfortable night's sleep. Strange to say, of the many steamers and sailing craft I made use of on this trip, I had rough weather on all, save and except the two crossings of the North Sea—out and home again.

On Tuesday morning (November 28) I embarked on one of the fine Lloyd steamers at Trieste, and after a most villainous passage, during a good deal of which I was the only passenger able to be present in the saloon at meal-times, we reached Corfu on Thursday afternoon. I disembarked here in order to devote two spare days to old friends in preference to spending them at Athens; and on the Saturday night, taking the same Greek line as on my previous trip, I sailed for the Piræus, arriving there on the morning of the appointed day. The Messageries steamer, however, was very late, and did not come in till nearly dark, making me fear that we should lose the Greek steamer, and consequently, the weekly boat to Milo from Syra. Meanwhile I had made out the dragoman and camp servant whom V. had engaged through the Athens Vice-Consulate. Although a most worthy and excellent person, and doubtless invaluable in his own particular line—that of personally conducting the British tourist round the Greek antiquities most generally visited by them—old Thomas was perhaps hardly the man for a rough shooting trip in uninhabited islands. Still, I am bound to admit he

bore considerable hardships with great pluck, and was certainly worth the wages V. paid him as a sort of involuntary jester and clown. Many a hearty laugh we had at old Thomas's sayings and doings, for a little joke goes a long way in camp; and even his incurable habit of never approaching our tent without falling over the ropes was considered sufficiently amusing to provoke our risible faculty. At last the French boat arrived, V. and his belongings were transferred to the Greek steamer, and we started off on our rough passage to Syra, and thence on the *Panhellenion* to Milo. The old boat, however, was not ready when we reached Syra—in fact she was under repair, and we had to wait there a day. We paid a visit to the Consulate, and learnt that the right of shooting ibex on Antimilo had been duly secured for us for the sum of £4, therefore we were rather disgusted on reaching Mr Gialeraki's house at Adamas, to find there a young officer of the Northumberland Fusiliers, stationed at Canea, who had just returned from Antimilo, where he had bagged three ibex, the best being a buck with a twenty-seven-inch head, for which sport he had only paid thirty shillings. What made this the more bitter was that he had heard of Antimilo solely from my own account of my first trip, which had appeared in *The Field* some months before; and also that he told us, and correctly, that there was not such another head left on the island. To be sure, his other two ibex were only a doe and a kid, the latter having stepped in front of, and received the bullet meant for, a buck; but the real sting of what he had to tell us was that Giorgio and his son being, like all Greeks now, armed with Gras rifles, had shot almost all the ibex.

The most interesting thing he had to show us, however, were half a dozen bronze arrow-heads of classical shape, which he had purchased at Antimilo from the shepherds who had picked them up amongst the rocks, and which therefore could hardly have been used in any other way except in ibex-shooting, in fact in the very manner described by Homer. Later on I obtained a still older relic, a beautifully cut flint arrow-head, but this was from Milo, where, however, there were no doubt ibex in the Stone age, and long after.

It was late on the 7th of December before we got away, and later still before our camp of two tents was duly pitched, by the boat-slip at Antimilo. Our party this time consisted of our two selves, Thomas, an English-speaking nephew of Mr Gialeraki's, who had been already engaged as interpreter for us, and whom we were therefore obliged to take, although he was not of the slightest use to us; Giorgio and no less than four of his sons, one being quite an infant. It had been agreed between us that we were to shoot independently, and quite alone, dispensing with native talent, so that we really had nothing to do but dine, smoke, and go to bed after our camp was pitched, there being neither arrangements to make nor orders to give.

Next morning being bright and fine, we were up betimes, and left our camp at a quarter-past seven. From my previous experience of the place it naturally fell to my lot to guide V. at the start, and I led the way up the great crater, and then across its upper lip to the spot where I had shot my first ibex two-and-twenty months before. From this point we made an unsuccessful spy over the mass of broken rock and

moraine below, and then prepared to separate. The first proceeding was to toss for ground. The western slopes fell to my lot, and we parted with mutual good wishes, which I, for my own part, considered little likely to be realised, for the wind, though decidedly puffy, was, as a rule, directly behind me.

So I was not much surprised that my first sight of ibex was (at ten o'clock) that of a herd, which, having caught my wind, were making their way at best pace towards the seaward cliffs. It was the largest herd I had ever seen, consisting as it did of no less than thirteen ibex, two of them being good bucks.

Giving up the hope of seeing this lot again at present, I worked on, comforted by the idea that the wind was shifting to the northward in its general direction, which, of course, was much more favourable to me.

Three-quarters of an hour after sighting the first herd, I came on another not more than eighty yards away. I dropped behind an immense boulder. Looking out from its right edge I could only see the *vorgeiss* or leading doe, a jet-black beast, with her yearling kid, but I also saw that the old lady had her head in the air, and was snuffing the air suspiciously. This was enough. I hurried to the other side of my shelter, but it was too late. The little herd—there were six of them—were in full flight ; and then I saw that they were accompanied by a good buck, almost white, with a vividly black shoulder and back stripe.

After a momentary delay to turn the glass on a stone which looked rather like a buck left behind, I hurried downwards to cut off the herd, leaving behind me my rucksack containing not only my lunch but also

my water—a step I subsequently had reason to regret. My first try to the gully to my left was a failure, then I made towards the right, and, following an *arête*, was not long before I sighted my beasts, now lying down. The worst of it was that they also saw me; and I had to lie some time motionless under the baleful gaze of the black doe. Through my glass I could distinctly see her green eyes fixed upon me with such an expression that I incontinently christened her "Becky Sharp." After about half an hour of this I turned over, and crawled on my stomach over the sky-line, filling myself pretty full of thorns in the process. The only shrubs and bushes of Antimilo which have survived the secular attacks of ibex and sheep, have done so on the principle of their being the fittest to do so by reason of their natural means of protection. They are, therefore, all spiny, some more than others. I descended some fifty yards behind the shelter of the *arête* and then crawled out on its top again. I found my beasts—rendered suspicious by my disappearance — all standing up. I could get no nearer; and the question now was whether to take the shot. It was a long one—two hundred and fifty yards at least, and across a deep gully, by no means a promising chance.

But whilst I lay there pondering, so to say, finger on trigger, the question was settled for me. Three times in succession the sharp crack of V.'s ·303-bore rang out on the other side of the hill, and my herd incontinently dashed off seawards. My first feeling was one of vexation at this not unnatural result of two guns working so small a piece of ground (the island is only some four miles square) separately; but I think in the sequel it proved all for the best.

I lay still, thinking some more might come down, and sure enough in about five minutes another herd of six with two fair bucks appeared above, going at their best pace, and crossing the very spot previously occupied by my herd, disappeared seawards in their turn. I had now to decide what I would do ; and my decision was to follow my original herd. Accordingly I made my way downwards. From a rocky peak some hundreds of feet lower down I did a careful spy, but in vain. In the hope of moving something I then rolled down a big rock. No result. I then had a last spy, when, to my delight, I made out Becky Sharp and her offspring lying on a fairly commanding point some five or six hundred yards below. Guessing, or rather hoping, that the lord of the harem would be somewhere thereabouts, I tried a nearer approach by crossing a couple of gullies and working down to a high point leeward, but from here again I could see nothing of the buck. Accordingly I rolled down another rock, and immediately became aware of a distinct goaty flavour on the breeze. Then five small beasts appeared in the gully immediately below me. But my glass was fixed on "Becky." For a full minute she lay still, looking in every direction, then jumped up and slowly made off, still seawards, with her kid; and then to my delight the big buck appeared from some hiding-place, and followed with a gouty hobble, irresistibly suggestive, in this connection, of his Lordship of Steyne. Presently they disappeared behind a small rock.

Now, how to get at them? Below me there was, firstly, a sheer precipice, and secondly, another herd, which, if disturbed from this side, must go their way and alarm them.

Regretfully — and deeply deploring my absent lunch — I made my way upwards again with the intention of making a circuit. Unfortunately I began too soon to descend, and the going became very bad. At last I got to a place where I found I could not get on, and thought I could not get back. The latter, however, I fortunately was able to manage. Retracing my steps I did a more extended round, which eventually brought me out on a slope leading down to the point I was making for. This slope I then compared in steepness to a roof, but this was a libel on the latter. However, it was fortunately covered with thorny growth, and I was able to get along it.

Down I worked till I arrived near the edge of another sheer precipice, and with joy I descried at its foot "Becky" feeding upwards. At the first glimpse I was down, and, working out on my back with my elbows and knees, I arrived at the rock which formed the lip of the precipice itself. Here I was so fortunate as to find not only a place where I could sit, but even a hollow for my left heel. I waited a while. The old buck had apparently found some tit-bits in a hollow below, but at last he jumped nimbly up to the shelf on which "Becky" stood. I waited for the shoulder shot, but he only showed it an instant, and then, as luck would have it, turned directly away from me. In firing down from such a sheer height this position was the greatest help to me. I sighted just over the root of the tail, and fired.

As the smoke cleared I caught sight of the buck's hind quarters falling over the ledge. Bump! bump!! bump!!! he went on the rocks below. "Becky" and her kid, which latter had appeared from some unspyable crevice, stood looking back at him a minute,

utterly puzzled as to whence the danger threatened, and then slowly made off. It was too late to think of getting down that night, so I climbed upwards to where I had left my lunch. The stalk had taken me just four hours, but I got back to my rucksack in fifty minutes, and taking out the waistcoat I had left in it, placed it on a large stone as a seat, and sat down and discussed my luncheon. Of course, when I had finished luncheon, I forgot all about the waistcoat, my only one, and walked off to camp without it. V. returned about the same time. He too had found ibex early in the day, but unfortunately, as he was stalking up to them, they started moving rather fast towards him without his knowing anything of it. The result was a mutual surprise, and a snap-shot, as unsuccessful as these shots generally are, followed by two futile shots at the bolting herd of six, no doubt the same one that came down to me.

Next morning I started off in the boat to pick up my buck, but after going round the north end of the island I totally failed to identify the place where he had fallen, from the sea. I saw some ibex high up in the seaward cliffs, and fired a couple of shots in the hope of sending them up to V.; but he had, as far as I recollect, a blank day on this occasion. I was back in camp by luncheon time; and after I had utilised the afternoon for an *al fresco* tub, down came the rain. Darkness fell, but no V. Old Thomas roundly abused me for letting him go alone when I, only, knew the island, but at last some shots were fired on the high and almost sheer peak above camp. I at once despatched Star with a lantern as a relief party, and eventually my partner got in in good time for dinner.

By this time I imagine our natives had made up their mind that my ibex was apocryphal; and indeed they went so far as to inform me that unless an ibex fell dead to the shot it was no use thinking of getting him, obviously disbelieving my statement that mine had so fallen. I did not argue the point, simply giving orders for Star to go with me next day, which turned out wet and misty. I led the way to the place where I had left my waistcoat, and where that garment, thoroughly saturated but otherwise uninjured, still lay; and taking my bearings from that point, guided the shepherd to the place whence I had fired. Further I could not go, but explained in dumb show where the ibex had stood, and where it had fallen. Then I watched him skilfully turn the precipice, and at last reach the spot where my quarry had stood. There he, too, disappeared, and I was left in alternative hope and fear, well knowing that there is nobody as good as one's self to find one's game, especially if there is no meat to be got by it. However, when an hour had elapsed I felt pretty confident. But I had to sit and shiver in pelting rain for another, trying to minimise my discomfort by lunch and tobacco, till at last Star appeared with the head. He had found the beast at the very edge of the sea, down to which it had rolled, and as the birds had destroyed the skin he had not brought it. V. had a blank day.

"After all there's nothing like it." With these words V. had closed the discussion which had ended in our deciding that we would go absolutely alone and stalk alone. And I had thoroughly agreed with him. Yet here I was, not half a week later, preparing to set out in the company of Star. Well, if

the flesh was weak, there was at least some excuse for the weakness. On the first day I had been out about ten hours, including a four hours' stalk, and, if the next day had been an easy one, Saturday had meant five hours climbing to the place where I had shot the ibex, and two hours sitting in cold rain whilst the lad descended the precipices. Moreover, I take it that there is no place better calculated than the islet of Antimilo to cause one to break through a resolution of this kind. As a rule you are either laboriously climbing up or else cautiously climbing down, and where the ground is level you still have to pick your way amongst big loose stones and thorny bushes. After a day or two of this one gets very tired of carrying a rifle and rucksack. Besides, I was giving V. something like a decade, which was perhaps the reason he good-naturedly said nothing when, after dinner on Saturday, I announced my intention of taking Star with me on the following day.

Accordingly, with the lad carrying my rifle and bag, with lunch and other necessaries, myself carrying only my telescope and alpenstock, we left camp about eight, having waited till then to let the rain cease. An hour's sharp climb brought us to the spot where I had killed my first ibex, whence we proceeded to spy the moraine to the southward and below us. The shepherd's quick eye was the first to pick up the game.

"'Αγριμια!" he ejaculated; and I soon had the glass on them. One look showed they were but small stuff, and not worth considering, so we moved on northwards. Not many hundred yards on there is another prominent ridge of rocks with an outlook

in the opposite direction, and from this the lad made a still better spy—so good indeed that it was some time before I managed to get a glass on two or three does in the middle distance. The boy, however, eagerly combated my suggestion that this again was a lot not worth consideration.

"Το μεγαλον! τα κερατα!" he kept on repeating, making signs that the horns were a yard long at least. At last I made out a buck, and the backs of some other ibex, and, though I had not seen the big one, I had no reason to doubt Star. Presently the herd disappeared. The only thing to be done seemed to be to try a direct approach, as the wind was fair, in the hope of picking them up again, so we proceeded to descend the cliff on which we had been lying. At the bottom of it was a moraine extending to more cliff and big rocks beyond. Just as Star had about crossed this, and I was in full view in the middle of it, I became aware of part, at least, of the herd, not five hundred yards away, looking hard at us.

For a while I lay motionless, and then crawled back to the rocks I had just left, and got out my telescope. Under the ridge of rock which now formed my sky-line were a fairish buck and three does feeding. Close beside, and in a line with them, lay the skeleton of an ibex. The animals in view did not seem alarmed, so as Star was now under cover I crawled down the moraine on my back in full view. Just as I had finished the descent and got out of sight, down came the rain. I sheltered under a rock as best I could, not daring to call to Star, who was somewhere above, and who, of course, had not the sense to bring me the mackintosh cape out of my rucksack. After the shower was over he

turned up, and we went on without much difficulty to a ridge of rocks some three hundred yards from the ibex, who had taken shelter from the rain in a series of caves. The buck was actually lying on the skeleton. Then came another storm; but this time I had my waterproof. The wind being perfectly steady, I smoked a pipe, and watched the beasts. After an hour of this, not seeing any chance of the goats moving, and still less of my getting any nearer, I decided to avail myself of a fine interval, and take the shot. Everything was against me—the distance, the fact that the overhanging rock threw the animal into deep shade, and, lastly, the fact that he was lying down. Moreover, as subsequent investigation proved, the nature of the ground was very deceptive, and the ibex were a great deal more below me than I realised.

I rolled up my cape, put it on the edge of the rock, rested my left hand on it, and fired. The bullet, I think (for I failed to find the mark afterwards), went over the buck's back, and sent him bolting out of his hole like a rabbit. Up jumped a number more out of various caves, including a much better and whiter buck, but he was out of sight before I could reload. I went down and examined the ground, but, as I expected, found no blood marks. The skeleton was that of a doe, which no doubt had been wounded by the shepherds and come here to die. We followed in the direction the herd had taken for some time, and then I called a halt for lunch. After this we went on again, and came right on the herd on an open hillside, which descends to the peninsula on the west of the island. Perhaps I was a bit lazy, but anyhow I convinced myself

that there was no cover nearer them than the ridge of rocks we were on, so I crept out to its farthest end and took a long shot—at the big buck this time.

Of course I missed, and again with two "shots of despair," as Mr E. N. Buxton calls them, which I sent after him as he galloped off. I found next day that these ranges were much longer than I had thought, so the day must have been a bad one in every way for judging distance.

The herd went on with a vengeance this time, and I knocked off and went back to camp. The result of my shots was, as it proved, of considerable importance to my partner. At the time I fired the last three he was actually stalking a herd, which my shots disturbed. Hardly had they disappeared when my herd came right down to him and gave him an easy chance. He knocked the second-best buck over the cliff—into the sea he feared—and his shot disturbing his original herd, they in their turn galloped past him, and he got another. Meanwhile Giorgio, without announcing his intention, had gone off with his rifle and bagged a young buck—a repetition of which performance we sternly forbade.

That night we were driven to realise the fact that we were weather-bound on Antimilo. For three days the north-easter had howled round our tents and beaten the flapping canvas day and night without intermission, save only when it had brought up a heavy shower of rain, or even hail. As to our being weather-bound there was no manner of doubt. The shepherds shook their heads emphatically when we pointed to Milo harbour across the intervening eight miles of rough sea. I myself was even doubtful

whether we could have launched our boat through the big rollers which boomed incessantly against the rocky shore. The wind gave no promise of cessation, and yet Tuesday was the very last day on which we must cross if we were to catch the *Panhellenion* on her weekly trip.

Monday was, for the purpose of putting to sea, a hopeless day, and the wind and rain beating on the tent made us little inclined to the early rising which is the rule in hunting camps. However, my companion had to go with the younger shepherd to bring in his ibex, so I determined to try my luck again with the elder man to make things easier for me by carrying my rifle and rucksack. When, however, at a quarter to nine, I was ready to start with Giorgio, he was not to be found, so I shouldered my impedimenta and started alone.

I made for the southern end of the island, and then worked along the western side, carefully spying every corrie and gully on my way, but in vain. At last I came in sight of the peninsula I have before mentioned.

This particular spot seems to have no attractions for the ibex; but the long and rather broad valley which leads down to it from the very top of the island has, for I have repeatedly noticed them there, so I made my way carefully to a rocky ridge overlooking this, and almost immediately had the glass on six ibex, one being a fine grey fellow with a distinct shoulder stripe. There was no chance of getting in at them where they were, so I sat down behind a big rock and ate my lunch, though it was only twelve o'clock. Just as I had finished they moved off to my left. I waited till I had seen the

last one disappear behind a spur below me, and then also made off to the left, with the intention of cutting them off. My advance had to be made with extreme caution, as I might meet them face to face any minute. But when I reached a point whence I could command a fair extent of open ground, on which I had made sure of seeing them, there was nothing on it but sheep. The ibex had passed over the next ridge. I followed, crossing a little rocky flat, and just before reaching a gully beyond it, caught sight of the herd trotting off, and dropped behind a big rock.

As I guessed, they had neither seen nor winded me. Their pace was too leisurely for that. Probably some of the sheep, of which there were a number to leeward, had started on winding me, and thus given the alarm. It was, however, as I have said, not a very lively one; and just short of the sky-line they all stopped, and commenced to feed upwards.

I now had time to notice that they had picked up a number more beasts on their way, and that the entire herd consisted of eleven ibex. Of these, three were bucks: one the old grey fellow, my destined victim; another brown, the usual colour of the young Grecian ibex; and the third a uniform dun. The rest were does and small beasts. Having fed up some way they then inclined to my left, thus making almost a semi-circle round my rock, and finally, to my disgust, the second-best buck lay down. I knew what that meant. Sure enough, after meditatively scratching his back with his horns, the big buck did the same, and in two minutes all were lying down peacefully chewing the cud. I lighted a pipe.

There is nothing more fascinating than watching

wild animals like this through a good telescope when they are quite unsuspicious of the presence of an enemy, although, by the way, I noticed they were careful enough to lie down with their heads facing in every conceivably different direction. The big fellow lay rather by himself. I daresay he was a bit of a bully, for I had noticed him butt at a doe which fed near him. Of the kids he seemed more tolerant. To my surprise, he got up at the end of some twenty minutes, but it was only to select a smoother rock, and down he went again. Fortunately the rain had cleared off and the sun was quite hot, so my position was not intolerable, though I lay behind that same rock for two mortal hours.

At last, on taking one of my periodical peeps over the top, I was surprised to see the herd trotting off again. One of those wretched sheep must have fed directly to leeward of me again and then evinced alarm. The ibex were not much frightened, but they kept on steadily till they crossed the sky-line at the highest point to my left, having thus circled almost completely round me since I first found them. No sooner were they out of sight than I was off in pursuit, though with little hope, for the wind was directly behind me. The rocky ridge I was ascending was, however, cut off from the farther hill by a small valley, along which, as I afterwards found out, there was a cross current of wind.

So when I again sighted them, or rather the big buck, conspicuous by his light colour, although they were apparently dead down wind, they lay perfectly still. I guessed how this was; and, leaving my rucksack and alpenstock, worked my way up to the highest point of my ridge on hands and knees. I was

now very nearly, if not quite, two hundred yards from the buck; and, worse still, he was lying down. Still, my watch warned me I must not wait for him to rise, unless I wished to risk being benighted on the hill. So I put my cap on a rock, and, resting my left hand on it, fired. All the herd jumped up, but only moved off slowly, waiting for their lord, who was evidently very sick. On the sky-line he staggered about till I thought he must fall. But he pulled himself together and disappeared after the others. First, going hastily back for my things, I made for the spot, and soon took up a fairly heavy blood trail, which I followed till the gathering dusk warned me of the risk I was running. At half-past four I knocked off the pursuit, barely getting back to camp by dusk.

V. had only succeeded in finding one ibex, the other having, as he had feared, fallen into the sea. Of course, the one he had brought in was the poorer of the two; indeed, his luck during this trip was wretched, but it was more than made up for in Assam a month or two later.

I passed a somewhat uneasy night, as is my wont when I am responsible for the sufferings of some unfortunate animal. The morning was again cold and wet, but as it was a case of putting to sea if it should turn out in the least degree possible, I was warned to get back by two o'clock at the latest. My companion, who owned to being somewhat "rock-sick," remained in camp. So I started off with the younger shepherd, and made my way to the spot where I had followed the blood trail the night before. The night's rain had completely washed it out, but Star made a lucky cast, and in about three-quarters of

an hour the buck got up out of a heap of rocks which forms one of the highest points of the island. The running shot was a little low for the heart, and he held on for a couple of hundred yards, finally falling into the head of a big ravine which looks down to the shepherd's hut. We had a stiffish climb to get round to him there, but when we did I was pleased to find he was much better than any buck I had yet killed. I now ate my lunch—with the less appetite, as Star was conducting the gralloch dead to windward, but there was no other place where I could sit. My shot of the evening before proved to be a little far back; to-day's, as I have said, just below the heart. Then I took the rifle and rucksack, the lad shouldering the buck, and we made our way down the ravine—a rough climb—reaching camp soon after one.

When I got there I found no hope of our getting away, but to our delight, about an hour later, a lateen-rigged craft of about thirty tons came out of Milo harbour and made her way towards us, finally hoisting the Union Jack and firing a gun. This was good enough for us; in half an hour the tents were struck and everything packed. Presently they hove to and sent away their boat. With some difficulty, and very nearly with the loss of our worthy, but somewhat ancient, dragoman, we got on board and stood across for the port. For our relief we had to thank our excellent Consular Agent, who, indeed, came off himself to fetch us. So, with no further mishap, we made Milo before dark.

That night we slept again on the old *Panhellenion*, and, sailing at daybreak, reached Syra in due course. Unfortunately there was no connecting steamer forth-

coming, and we were obliged to remain twenty-four hours. I utilised this delay partly in getting my last specimen roughly prepared, which time had not admitted of before we left Milo. On the following evening we sailed for the Piræus, and the rest of our trip is related in chapter xxix.

CHAPTER XXVI.

SOME MASTERS OF HOUNDS.[1]

If I were asked to name the most thoroughly typical and delightful of the many Masters of Fox-hounds with whose hounds it has been my pleasure and privilege to see sport, I should be in a considerable difficulty; but I am perfectly certain that if I had to make a very small list of these, I should certainly not omit that of the late Mr Garth, nor, I am sure, would any soldier whose lines were laid at Aldershot during the latter half of the nineteenth century. Wherever hunting soldiers foregathered in other continents it was hardly likely that the evening would pass without a reference to the "dear old chap at Aldershot" and his blue bird's-eye tie—this was never forgotten. Indeed, it is an uncommon component of modern hunting attire, and I think I have only once seen it elsewhere — on Mr Scott-Plummer, then Master of what is now the Lauderdale. As I am mentioning that gentleman, I might add that, as far as I recollect, he was the only Master I have known to hunt in spectacles, though, by the way, Lord Robert Manners, the new joint-Master of the Belvoir, does so.

[1] Although this chapter was only written last year, death has been busy with some of those mentioned therein; amongst them my kind friends, Lords Llangattock and Tredegar.

To return to Mr Garth. Although his feelings, and his love for his hounds, must have been frequently hurt by the "goings on" of a field composed largely of hard-riding subalterns, I have hardly ever heard his voice raised in reproof—never in bad language, of which I feel sure he was incapable. On the other hand, his kindliness was only equalled by his keenness, and I have known him to ride for a long time with a youngster, describing in full details the sport of a previous Friday, when the boy had not been present. Mr Garth, too, had the royal gift of not forgetting a face, and I have several times been addressed by him with "Back again!" after an absence of several seasons from the neighbourhood of the Long Valley.

When the Royal Buck-hounds came to an end I, and I daresay many others, hoped that arrangements might have been made to convert the establishment into that of Royal Fox-hounds. I daresay if Mr Garth had then been approached he would have been willing to consider a retirement in favour of his Sovereign; and after all, as things turned out, it would have made very little difference in point of time, as his own Mastership ended one season later. I cannot help thinking this would have been an ideal arrangement, especially as a Royal Deputy-Master was to hand in the form of Prince Christian—so regular a follower of this pack. However, it was not to be, and the next best thing happened when the Hunt took in perpetuity the name of the Master who had ruled its fortunes for half a century. It is wonderful to think what changes he must have seen in his country in that time!

Of the royal lady in whose demesne Mr Garth hunted, I am, I fear, not privileged to write as a

"Master I have known" (unless, indeed, the fact that I have been present at one of her Drawing-rooms, in attendance on ladies of my family, can be so interpreted). What interest she took in the buck-hounds I have never been able to ascertain—indeed I am unable to state that she was ever present at a meet. It is amongst my memories that it was on the way home from hunting that I found the flag at the Curragh half-masted on account of her death, as mentioned in another chapter.

To return to Masters of Fox-hounds, I think few who knew him would omit from their list of the most popular the eighth Duke of Beaufort. To speak of him as a Master would be indeed supererogatory, for he has left his own mark on the sport—one little inferior to Warde's or Meynell's. To recall even what one person can know of his many acts of kindness would fill the space allotted to this article. Personally, among many others, I may mention that he was good enough to allow me to dedicate my first book, *Gun, Rifle, and Hound*, to him, and I treasure the letter which he wrote to me after reading the book, though modesty forbids quotation.

Although he was personally little known to me, I have always had the most vivid recollection of the late Lord Spencer as a Master; but here I have been forestalled by Whyte-Melville. I can never think without laughing of an absurd little scene between the Earl and some galloping snob, whom he certainly (and of right as Master) rather hustled in a gateway. "Snob" hotly maintained the correctness of his position, and Lord Spencer's profuseness of apology was so irresistibly comic that tears of laughter ran down the cheeks of a Pytchley field. It has since occurred

to me that the interlocutor possibly did not know to whom he was speaking, for Lord Spencer was wearing a *black* frock-coat, which fact enables me to fix the date, just after the death of the Duke of Clarence.

Another altogether delightful M.F.H., though a very different sort of man from the "Red Earl," was John Lawrence. Let me not be misunderstood to imply that there was anything but position between the two men, for Lawrence had in a wonderful way the "grand manner" of a past day.

How great was his popularity, especially amongst west country and Welsh hunting men and women, was proved at the time of his testimonial. Lawrence's was a personality to which one would naturally attach "good stories"; but though I was more or less brought up in his country, and hunted with him, albeit at long intervals, for years, I fail to recollect anything of the sort. Of his hunt there were stories galore, especially concerning his queer one-handed huntsman, Evan; but these as a rule are too Rabelaisian for publication. As a hound-breeder he was pre-eminent, for he had the art of breeding his hounds, not for this or that good quality, *but for the purpose of killing foxes.* This, I believe, was the secret of his success.

One cannot think of Welsh Masters—though by the way the Llangibby is so entirely English as even to have another pack[1] between them and the Welsh border-line—without pausing at the name of Mr W. R. H. Powell, so long a Master in Carmarthenshire. In strict fact I have no right to include that gentleman in the list of masters I have known, because, though having pleasant memories of good sport in

[1] Lord Tredegar's—now discontinued.

various seasons with his pack, I never saw him ; but I believe he was present at Carmarthenshire Steeplechases when I was riding there. Like John Lawrence's huntsman, Mr Powell's Jack Rees was a character, but of another sort, for he might have been, and probably was, a churchwarden. In the field he was an aristocrat. I still remember my surprise at hearing him ride up to the only member of the family out, and say : "I'm going home now, miss." A still greater character was his humpbacked whipper-in ; and I shall not readily forget seeing this worthy's horse put his foot in a hole, and the torrent of (Welsh) profanity that proceeded from the little bundle of humanity lying on the horse's neck, and clawing the mane. It was irresistibly funny. On one occasion a friend of mine entered a local tailor's and found the whip being fitted for his "pink," and apparently very dissatisfied. Snip appealed to the gentleman :

"It is not a good figure, look you, sir. There shall be a boomp somewhere," running his hand over the little man's deformity.

Another Welsh Master of the best—I must, I think, call him Welsh, for since those days he has taken a Welsh title—was "Johnny" Rolls of the Monmouthshire. The kindest and cheeriest of men, as a Master he was an optimist. It was all "capital"—"Capital day!" "Capital fox!" "Capital run!" Indeed, this is the very best spirit for a Master. It makes things otherwise indifferent "Capital," whereas a sour-faced M.F.H. gives the day a bad name at the start.

Mr Rolls had as huntsman one of the trio of brothers whom I think the very best professionals

I have ever hunted with — Will Goodall of the Pytchley, Stephen of the Monmouthshire, and Frank of the Kildare. The huntsman died young; but the Master, I am glad to say, still flourishes,[1] and will, I hope, take my remarks in good part. Fortunately a large number of Masters whom I have known are still going strong, though not all in office. Yet this to a great extent limits the scope of my article. What am I to say, *inter alia*, of Lord Lonsdale? A man whom I have always mentally compared with another famous Master of Hounds—Villiers, Duke of Buckingham. What of the Duke of Grafton, probably the most popular man in England in his own country; and what of that other Crimean veteran, Lord Tredegar—to make a "bull," just as popular in his own country as the Duke?

When I hunted with the Grafton the command was in the hands of the Pennants. The late Lord Penrhyn, though I shared some capital gallops with him, then handed over the hounds to his son, and he was in all respects a "charming" Master. With him was associated Mr Robarts, equally genial and cheery. I never heard this gentleman's conduct commented upon except on the occasion on which he asked a shining ornament of the burlesque stage to hunt elsewhere. This was, of course, the upshot of a feminine cabal; and it must be remembered that the Grafton were then a private pack. Still, I think it was a mistake, and very different was the conduct of Lord Spencer one day that hounds paused at Althorp. He asked us all to come in, but he particularly pressed the lady I have referred to to do so. She, however, declined to quit her saddle.

[1] Since these lines were written fate has regrettably falsified them.

What, again, can I say of Mr Fernie, the very last Master I have met in the field with his hounds since writing the above, and one who during a recent season made hunting history by two great runs, one covering a large extent of Quorn territory, and the other a still larger one of that of the Pytchley? Well, I can say without personality that he, the longest-established (if the expression may be allowed) Master in the Shires, is certainly the best-beloved, and that his conduct in continuing to carry on the Hunt after being personally incapacitated from riding to hounds as of yore, is appreciated not only in Leicestershire, but wherever hunting men foregather. In the sport his hounds have shown during the past two seasons, I think I may say that he has his reward.

An unusual Master, whom I saw in the field at one time but did not know, was the late Comte de Paris, who brought his harriers to Easton Neston one day. He did not look very much the Master, and rode a barb with flowing mane and tail, with a cavalry seat of the old school. I don't remember that we had much sport.

Among Masters of my acquaintance I reckon Mr C. J. Radclyffe of Hyde, singular for the fact that he was at once M.F.H. and Master of Roe-hounds—the last pack in England. Mr Radclyffe is peculiar from the circumstance that while hale and hearty (as I hope he still is) he gave up hunting altogether after its having been so much a part of his life, and devoted himself mostly to the gun, though always having foxes in the coverts for the hounds he had once ruled over. Another Master whom I knew, the late Mr Lovell, did much the same—in fact, he never would

even see the New Forest Deer-hounds, that he had brought into being, after he resigned. He was one-handed, and so was a contemporary of his, who also hunted deer, Mr Basset of the Devon and Somerset, a most lovable man—there is no other word for it—with whose hounds I saw three-and-thirty "warrantable deer" set up.

Of Irish Masters my experience has been more limited. Major St Leger Moore always seemed to me the right man in the right place, and even the unruly Kildare field listened to *him*. Also in Meath was the country suited with a Master whilst the late Mr John Watson held office. But my personal knowledge of these Masters was very slight.

Nor have I known many Scottish M.F.H.'s—to one of whom I have already referred. Another I could almost put in the same list as Mr Powell, as a Master with whose hounds I saw much good sport without ever seeing the Master out himself. But I did once see the Duke of Buccleuch (it is to him that I refer) with his hounds, the meet being at his fishing lodge at Bowhill, really quite out of his usual country. But there was never any want of "lang Lords Scott" out with the pack, and the man who held his own with them could flatter himself he had gone pretty well.

Amongst eccentric Masters I always look back with a chuckle to the late Admiral Parker of the Dartmoor. Indeed, I fancied that some of his field attached themselves more to the Master than to his hounds, probably knowing that whilst sport in the rough Dartmoor country was uncertain, the Master was a sure draw for some saying which would that evening set the mess-table in a roar. Especially vivid is a memory of being lost with

"the Admiral" in a fog on the moor, when blasts from the horn varied with "damns" from the voice, and quaint monotone in great variety. Not only were we lost, but the Master had lost both his hounds and his huntsman. The latter, by the way, would have been no great loss had it been a permanent one.

Another queer Master was the late Mr d'Avigdor, whose sporting books, signed "Wanderer," seem already to be forgotten, as I see articles with that signature appearing in *The Field*. In personal appearance Mr d'Avigdor always reminded me of the "A.D.C." in *Handley Cross*, "all teeth and hair, like a rat-catcher's dog." Moreover, he wore a double eye-glass. I never knew him as a Master, for his M.F.H. experience was Irish (a good deal of it is to be found in his book, *A Loose Rein*); but his heart was in hunting, and his death was the result of accidents with his stag-hounds — the West Surrey.

I am often asked, "Who was the best Master-huntsman you ever saw?" and am much puzzled how I should reply; but I should put Mr Lort-Philips very high on any list, and he was so keen that I have always been surprised that he should so entirely have given up hunting hounds when quite a young man. I think, on the whole, the present Duke of Beaufort would by most people be put at the top of the tree of amateur huntsmen; and I have a high opinion of the brothers Curre, who for years have always shown sport in divers poor-scenting countries. None the less do I incline to the idea that the best arrangement is a good professional under a good Master. Moreover, there

are few bad professional huntsmen, because a bad huntsman rarely gets a chance to carry the horn, and if he does he will not hold the appointment long. But if a bad amateur has plenty of money he can always get a country.

I don't seem to have had very much experience of harriers somehow, and yet I think there is very often a great deal of individuality about the "M.H." Both in England and in Ireland I have seen oddities, but more amusing ones to see than to read of. The typical Master of Harriers of my acquaintance was the late Mr Chorley of the "Q.H.," and his hounds were as typical as himself. In fact, with the exception of Mr Sperling's, I don't think I ever saw a better pack. I remember hunting with one in the Shires, which was said to be kept by what Jorrocks called a "Lord High Keeper"—*i.e.*, of a private asylum. It was said that there were separate days for the patients, but, if true, I am sorry to say it was never my privilege to happen upon these. The Master, whom I first met on Exmoor, was a very good fellow.

I do not remember anything particular about Masters of Drag-hounds except that I hunted with one who was then called Major (or perhaps Lieutenant-Colonel) French, and who is rather better known nowadays. One reason for mentioning this is that *Baily's Hunting Directory*, usually so correct, says that the Aldershot Drag-hounds were "started in 1907." Sir John French was Master in 1884; and what is referred to is probably a revival.

CHAPTER XXVII.

IN AN INDIAN FOREST RESERVE.

In my rambles in the hills, some seven or eight miles round my station, I came upon an antique gateway of Hindoo architecture forming the centre of a battlemented wall. I pushed my Arab up the much-broken paved roadway which led to it. The gates which had closed it were long since gone, and the walls were broken and undermined in a dozen places by the numerous trees, now in all their greenness under the influence of the summer rains. On the gateway itself and the wall adjoining half a score of pea-fowl were sunning themselves. On my left as I entered was a peaked rock, which was connected at each side with the masonry enceinte. As I proceeded through the grove, which pointed to the existence of water higher up the valley, I became aware that the place I had entered must in other days have been a fortress of great strength. The gorge was, or rather had been, completely closed by the wall through which I had entered, and the steep hills each side were also crowned with masonry. Presently a bend in the road revealed one of those Indian views which are so effective in the distance and so disappointing when approached near. On a

lower hill was perched the graceful form of an old castle, with the native village nestling at its foot. Behind, the hills ran back, forming a ruddy background in the setting sun. Between me and the village lay a large tank with a *bund* of antique masonry, which was crowned with a line of lofty trees. The *bund* itself formed a large garden, evidently badly kept, and at one end stood a bungalow of some kind.

The setting sun warned me that I must be going, so as to get on to the high-road before dark. I rode off, promising myself another visit to the valley before long.

Next day I made some inquiries as to the place I had seen. I learnt, firstly, what was indeed obvious —that the place had been in the old days a strong fortress, and the seat of a petty Rajpoot chief. The family had, however, fallen on evil times since the days of British rule had commenced. The ruin which the inability to levy tribute (and no doubt to plunder) had commenced, the *bunnias*[1] had completed. The old family were gone. Who inhabited the castle I know not, for I never went there, knowing by experience that it is better to see these native places from a distance. I was further told that the old bungalow I had seen had been erected years ago as a sort of club by the officers of the garrison. They had taken it in turns to go there for a change, and the then well-kept gardens had supplied them with vegetables. The thing had come to an end, probably as increased travelling facilities enabled the subscribers to go to the hills when they wanted a

[1] *Bunnias*—the hereditary grain-dealing caste, who combine with their ancestral occupation the more profitable one of usury.

change; and the place had fallen into the hands of a *bunnia*, who cannot find it a very profitable property, I should imagine. The great thing which I learnt was that the bungalow — only the bare walls, of course — was available for the use of any one who cared to use it. I promised myself a few days' holiday there provided there should prove to be any chance of sport, which I had sent my *shikari* out to ascertain.

On his return he made a favourable report. The reverse slope of the hills forming the valley I have mentioned was, he said, forest reserve, and contained plenty of blue-bull; and there were panthers, one having killed a calf only that week.

I think I should here explain what a "forest reserve" is. To prevent the reckless destruction by the natives of all the timber, Government has marked out all through India enormous tracts as forest reserve. No wood-cutting is allowed in these, and they are walled round to prevent cattle entering them. In such wooded districts as Central India they form real forests of sâl or teak, and are watched with jealous care — no shooting even being allowed in them, except during the rains, for fear of forest fires. In Rajputana they vary according to the district. In the reserves I am speaking of it would be difficult to find a timber tree—the growth, as a rule, being low jungle with thorn bushes. Nobody can doubt, however, that they will in time form real forests and be very beneficial to the country. All over India these reserves form natural strongholds for the game, who are not only safe there from native guns, but even from disturbance by cattle and their guardians. I have even seen it

stated in Indian papers that these reserves account for the large increase of tigers in some districts; and I think that this is very likely to be the case.

Having, then, obtained a favourable report as to the chances of getting something to shoot, and induced three others of the garrison to promise to accompany me, I proceeded to make the necessary arrangements. In England the idea of furnishing an empty house for a couple of days would strike a householder with horror. In India one contemplates the idea of sending out tables, chairs, beds and bedding, baths, and even cooking utensils, with equanimity — the result of residence in a country where every man has his tent, as in England he has his umbrella. It was consequently only necessary to give the order that we were going to such and such a place for so many days, and the thing seemed to arrange itself. On the actual day of departure we were, perhaps, a little short of glass and plate, but hardly sufficiently so to show that the furniture for a house had departed early that morning.

As the sun's rays decreased in intensity our horses were brought round and we mounted. At the same time our body-servants, carrying those endless parcels that a native servant never will dispense with, started off in a *tonga* or Indian dog-cart. We had some greyhounds with us, but our route soon lay among rocky valleys where there was no chance of sport, as, though we found several times, the dogs soon lost sight of their game. Towards sunset we reached the bungalow and found everything ready for our reception. To be sure, there were some things to remind us that we were not at home, as,

for instance, the relics of a bird's nest on the bar of a decayed punkah. But as it was not very hot that did not matter. When we had doffed our riding things and reappeared in clean white, dinner was ready. The meal over, we sat for a long time in the open air, watching the moon and the stars reflected in the lake-like waters of the tank, and discussing the chances of sport of next day. At last we turned in.

Next day we were up betimes, but not very early, as there was no need for hurry. After our tea had been disposed of we mounted and started for the rendezvous. Passing the village and the castle, a couple of hundred yards through the jungle brought us to another old gateway, which completed the circle of the old defences. Going through this we shortly emerged on a plain. Our way, however, led round the outskirts of the hill till we came to another native village called Nayagaon. Here we found the *shikari* with a couple of forest constables and the beaters, about sixty in number. After a preliminary conference we dismounted and followed the *shikari*, while the beaters took a path up the hillside. The *shikari* posted two of the guns in a broad valley separated from the plain by only one hill. The other two of us he took towards the main hill. Here he told us he proposed to post one near the base, and the other in a saddle higher up. I elected to remain below, and my subaltern, P——, had to climb the other hundred feet of rock.

Scarcely had he done so when the beaters appeared at the head of the valley. They advanced steadily, and several times I heard the furious shouts which mean "game on foot." Presently P——'s rifle rang out twice. Again this happened. The beaters had

nearly got to us when I heard them yelling, and saw what I took to be a panther going towards P——. Again he fired. Just then some gazelle came galloping down the valley between D—— and myself. We both fired, but a running gazelle is a small mark at a hundred yards, and they went on untouched. The beat was over. P—— came down from his hill and told us that he had missed two hyænas and killed one, besides seeing another he did not get a shot at.

For the next beat we had to climb to the top of several parallel passes. When I afterwards got to know the ground better, I found out that the *shikari* had arranged the guns badly. Had we been stationed half a mile further on, we could easily have commanded the whole ground, whereas, as will be seen, this was not the case. Moreover, in going to our posts, we obviously disturbed the very places we were going to beat. My post was only to be attained by climbing nearly half a mile of rocky ridge. When about half-way up it, the beaters on the opposite hill disturbed a nylghau. I could not see any horns, and consequently did not care to fire; but the *shikari* swearing it was a bull, I at last did take a shot as it stood for a minute as if considering where it should go. It was a very long shot, and across a deep gorge, which is never conducive to good shooting, and I missed. The beast at once plunged into the jungle beneath, and we never saw it again. At last I reached the ridge, which was between two almost precipitous valleys. The beat only produced one chikara,[1] which I killed with the

[1] The gazelle, also known as the "ravine deer." This was one of the few times I ever saw one in a ravine.

smooth-bore. When the beat was over, I found that some nilghai had gone up the passes nearest the plain, which were unwatched.

The next beat only produced some pig, which, of course, near a station, are sacred, being reserved for pig-sticking. The others were evidently getting sick of the whole thing, so I reluctantly gave the signal to knock off, and we returned the way we had come. Had we only known it, we left the two best beats behind us, and we could have taken them so as to go home that way after a short climb.

Breakfast over, I could find no one who cared to leave the bungalow, so I went out by myself. I had a couple of beats in some high jungle on the left of the valley of the castle itself, but saw nothing. I returned rather disgusted, but convinced the want of sport was due to faulty arrangements rather than to want of game.

Next day we returned to the station, coursing as we went.

Scarcely a week had elapsed before I had arranged to beat the same jungle again. Accordingly, on the 10th of August, driving out from the station, I arrived at Nayagaon about nine o'clock. The *shikari* had a score of beaters waiting. We first drove the piece which had formed our first beat on the 3rd, I taking the station which had been P——'s on that day. I hoped to kill some more of the hyænas, concerning which the natives made bitter complaints. I did not, however, think that these complaints were well founded, knowing the cowardly nature of these brutes, and felt sure a panther had been at work. However, neither panther nor hyæna was at home. I

now stopped the beat and mounted my Arab, directing the *shikari* to let the men recommence shortly, and beat right through steadily till he saw me again. Emerging on to the plain I rode on, passing all the places we had stood at the week before. At last I came to a place which I thought would do. On my right was the main range, on the left a steep hill with a valley each side, both of which I could fairly cover. This would do, as it was obvious that all game the beaters found must either come to the gun or break out over the plain. I had already learnt that they would not cross the main ridge.

A long time elapsed before I could see or hear anything of the beaters. Meanwhile it began to rain as it only can in India. In ten minutes the valleys were filled with roaring streams, which rolled the loose stones down in their mad career. It left off, however, as suddenly as it had begun, and I uncovered my rifle again. I ought to have mentioned before that a brother officer had asked me to try a rifle of his—a ·500 Express. I had fired a few shots at the target with it and found it fairly reliable, but the day was not over before I regretted not having brought a 12-bore.

At last I saw a dark object appear at the top of the pass before me. I was, of course, invisible, being hidden by a clump of jungle. Slowly it descended the hillside, and finally, as it heard the beaters behind, broke into a trot, keeping along the side of the main hill. It was a blue-bull. It passed me at about sixty yards. I fired and hit it, but it went on slowly. Again I fired and it fell, but got up and went on slowly. A third time I fired, anathematising the pop-gun I had in my

hand.[1] Again I hit it, and after going a few yards it collapsed.

My attention was now directed to a hyæna which was stealing round the hill to my left. I tried to get a shot, but the cunning brute dodged from bush to bush. Meanwhile I heard shouts behind, and to my disgust saw two natives where the bull had fallen, and the bull himself just disappearing over the hill. I waited till the beat was over, and then went towards the natives, who, it seemed, had gone to look at the bull. By doing this they had moved him, and he had gone on. I need hardly say a wounded animal should never be disturbed in this way by an unarmed man. They summon up, as it were, a reserve of vital force from somewhere, and go on a mile, whereas if left to themselves for a quarter of an hour or so, they rarely move again.

On this occasion, anyhow, the bull was gone, and the *shikari*, as usual, seemed to have no idea what to do. How I longed for my Cingalese trackers! To make matters worse, a heavy storm came on, which of course would obliterate all tracks of the blood. When the shower was over we resumed our beat in the hope of finding the bull. We entered upon a long tract of low jungle running along the base of the hills. For a long time we saw nothing, till at last I called up my horse to ride back to where I had fired, and where my trap was waiting. Just at the minute, in a deep hollow full of thorn-trees, up jumped a bull. I only got a snapshot with both barrels, but heard one bullet, at least, strike.

[1] I should rather have spoken of the cartridge with the long hollow point to the bullet. See chapter on "Trade Bullets" in *The Snaffle Papers.*

The bull left the jungle, and, jumping the boundary wall like a hunter, galloped across the plain. I ran down where he had gone and saw blood where he had jumped the wall. Luckily my horse was there, and I jumped on his back. The bull had got a good long start, and was heading for a jungle-covered hill not a mile and a half away. Fortunately I knew the country on this side, so rode as hard as my Arab could lay legs to ground, not after the bull, but towards the hill. My manœuvre was successful. As I neared the hill I saw the bull on my right, and he saw me. As I expected, he changed his direction, and now made for a lofty range, straight before us, but several miles away.

Bar accidents I had him now. I pulled the game little bay together and gradually gained on the "chase," to use a nautical expression. The going, which had been simply awful at first, improved as we went. In a couple of miles I was within easy range, and felt tempted to get off and fire. But the Arab was new to the work, and, worse still, I had only the cartridges in the rifle. So I determined to stick to him, and in a few minutes more I was alongside. Dropping my reins on to my left arm I raised the rifle and fired. No result at first, but presently the bull pulled up rather suddenly. I held off a bit, thinking I might get a charge, but the poor brute only shook his head threateningly. A gush of blood came from his mouth, his knees tottered, he was down, and in a minute my knife was in his throat.

Imagine my surprise to find this was the same bull after all. Besides two trifling wounds, he had one in the ribs, and another through the head not

much below the eyes. Either of these would have been fatal with the 12-bore. As it was he had lived an hour, and then galloped some three miles without apparent difficulty. This was indeed a scathing commentary on the Express with hollow bullet. I never fired at a nylghau again except with a 12-bore.

I rode back to my people, and ordered them to get a cart and bring the bull to my house. The trap had turned up and I started to drive home. *En route* it fell dark. Never have I seen a blacker night. To make matters worse, the fearfully vivid lightning blinded driver and ponies. Over and over again we found ourselves off the road. The rain came down in bucketfuls. We nearly wound up with a serious accident, for the driver drove against one of the side rails of a bridge. But though it broke it did not let the trap fall over. I was shot out and broke my knees. At length we saw the lights of the cantonment, and half an hour later, having revelled in a warm bath, I was sitting down to a somewhat late dinner.

I still thought that this particular jungle owed me something, and about a month later (September 18th) I went out to beat it again.

I had the worst of bad luck all day, seeing plenty of nylghau, but all cows and calves, at which I would not shoot. At last I reached the place I have previously described. Nothing came to the gun, but some two hundred yards up the left-hand valley I saw a huge bull. Apparently he saw or avoided me, for he turned off into a little side valley. When the beaters came to me, I told them to return by the plain outside and beat this little valley to me.

Meanwhile I walked to the near end of it, and posted myself behind a thick thorn clump. The valley was something the shape of a ⊣, of which I had advanced up one limb, while the foot ran towards the plain. The beaters soon appeared opposite me, and in a very few minutes it was evident that the bull had made tracks. I was just going to move away when frantic shouts of "*Bagh! bagh!*" (Tiger! tiger!) and wild howls arose from the beaters. I could see nothing, and supposing it was only a hyæna, or perhaps even a jackal, I stepped out from my place of concealment.

Lying between my bush (so to speak) and the adjoining one was an enormous panther! I certainly never was so taken aback. We were about eight feet apart, and, as there were no side issues through the thorns, one of us must give way or die. Fortunately there was no question of a hollow bullet this time. My trusty 12-bore was in my hands. I think we faced each other for half a minute. If ever I saw wrath personified it was then. With ears flat back against its head, and contracted lips showing the white teeth, it glared at me with its fierce eyes, keeping up a snarling growl, and lashing the ground with its tail.

Slowly, slowly, I raised the heavy rifle, and aimed at the broad chest just where the chin allowed me to see it. I recollect now that I remembered to allow for the rise of the ball at so short a distance, and, taking a very fine sight, I pulled the trigger. As I did so I jumped back a step and drew my knife with my right hand.

It was unnecessary, for as the smoke cleared I saw the fierce head dropping on the paws, and the great

cat lay still. The shock of the heavy bullet had prevented a single movement. The conical ball had entered the left side of the chest and raked all the vitals, causing instantaneous death. The beaters came crowding round to join in cursing the panther's ancestors to the most remote degree. The calves and goats were avenged. It was an old male, and in splendid condition. He was soon fastened on to the tonga, and I drove home in triumph.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

OVER THE BORDER.

Having what I may fairly call a "life experience" of English hunting, and one covering, at intervals, a score of years of the same sport in Ireland, it had long been a wish of mine to see something of the chase in the other sister-kingdom (one has to be so very careful in these days not to offend any "national" susceptibility that I should perhaps add that hunting in at least three Welsh countries is familiar to me, and that I have even had a—blank—day in Cornwall, which I understand some Celtic purists say should be considered a separate kingdom, or, at any rate, country). Of Scottish hunting I knew little beyond the classic facts that it produced a Whyte-Melville, who, ungratefully enough, nowhere describes the sport of his own shire, or rather kingdom, of Fife; and that an Anstruther-Thomson thought well enough of it to go from the Pytchley to it. On the other hand, Surtees, who, as a Northumbrian, was a near neighbour, made his famous hero sentence an offender to be condemned to hunt in Berwickshire for the rest of his life. I fancy, all the same, that a good deal of his local colour comes from over the Border. Jock Haggish, the Duke of Tergiversation's huntsman,

is surely drawn or caricatured from the famous Williamson, who was so good a servant to the contemporary Duke of Buccleuch; and, indeed, in the *Analysis of the Hunting Field*, Surtees repeats several of the best-known stories of that worthy.

However, to quit second-hand sources of information, it was not till a recent season that I was able at last to see something of the chase in "Caledonia stern and wild." Stern and wild she was, too, with deep and heavy snow about Christmas, and a frost which let hounds out of kennel only four times in five weeks of the two following months. The Fife Hounds lost twenty (nearly one-third) of their sixty-six hunting days. Snow again stopped hounds as late as March 19th, and gales and bad scent marked the close of the season. Moreover, on my private account, stable troubles interfered with some of my sport; so altogether, and apart from local conditions, it was not a season to look back upon with unalloyed satisfaction. Still, it enables me to give the reader some idea of what is, from a hunting point of view, a *terra incognita* to most Englishmen.

I must begin by saying that my personal Scottish experience was limited to two packs: one probably the admitted "Quorn" of Scotland; the other a provincial hunt, owning a good deal of rough country —hill, moor, and wire. From the latter curse the big pack suffers little, but timber is supplied with such a lavish hand to the farmers that the tendency of the fences is yearly to degenerate more and more from hedges into posts and rail, pure and simple. Now, this is a fence that tends to become monotonous, and is one which, with a blown horse, may easily lead to worse things than *ennui*. It is true that the timber

is here, practically invariably, of the Scotch fir (by the way, this and whisky seem to be the only two things it is permissible to call "Scotch" and not "Scottish" or "Scots" nowadays) variety, and a heavyish horse can generally be trusted to smash it rather than turn over—if he only hits it hard enough. One thing I may add, as one who, like Mr Jorrocks, has "na carle to ride for rayputation," and that is, that in the matter of gate-fastenings the country is deplorably provided. Only on one estate did I notice a proper hunting latch; but the usual arrangement is a hook on the end of a chain—a device I have never seen used elsewhere. When I say that, in addition to this, the gates generally have a little piece of barbed wire nailed along them—I presume to prevent cattle rubbing the hook out of the staple it fits into—it is hardly necessary to remark how much work this arrangement gives the recording angel. To complete this picture, I may add that the gate is quite unjumpably high—I ought perhaps to add "for one of my kidney," but I did not *see* one jumped during the season—and the take-off, generally, a mass of big, loose stones collected off the nearest field before ploughing. The other gate of the country is a "heave-gate," frankly not to be opened from the saddle, but usually jumpable.

That there is much arable goes without saying, for Scottish land that is not moor and knows not the plough is always the exception. The rotation system of the district, however, which gives one year's corn and one of roots to four of grass (less on the best land), reduces this drawback a good deal. On the other hand, it accounts for the good upkeep of the fences enclosing the arable; and whilst, in other

countries, we cross a ploughed field with the comfortable feeling that, bar a boundary fence, we may look for an easy jump out, here we find the fence just of the same type as that between two grass fields. It is only right to add that the plough is not, as a rule, of a very deep or holding kind.

The coverts vary, except that gorse coverts are few and far between. Foxes are generally found in the shrubberies and woods adjoining gentlemen's seats, or as they are here called, the "policies" of the house, or else in the fir strips scattered about the country, which afford good covert for their first ten years, and practically none for the next quarter of a century. Probably for this reason, the meet is almost invariably at such a house—never at an inn; but, by the way, there are few wayside inns, and that, when you come to think of it, deprives Scottish hunting of a familiar concomitant of our own chase. Who has not been glad of a glass of beer and a bucket of gruel, for man and horse respectively, on a long ride home?

Whilst the hunting field in Scotland may be described as similar to our own, but containing less of the professional class, and, in my experience, no cleric of any denomination and but a small proportion of farmers, there is an item which strikes one at once by its absence, if the bull be excusable. There are no "foot people"—a class in England containing some of the very best sportsmen out. For the Irish "wrecker" type I have considerably less liking; but many a "bhoy" loses his day's pay for a "hunt" with no interested motive at all. No Scotsman does this, not I think really from pecuniary motives, but merely because he feels no desire to join in the sport. The apathetic attitude of ploughmen, fencers, and

such-like, when hounds run past them, seem to me to prove this, as does the fact that during a whole season I have never once been asked any question as to our sport by any native encountered on my homeward way. It is true that in England the question is often not scientific: "How many 'ave ye cotched, sir?" being a common form of interrogatory; but it shows an interest taken in the thing. I missed, too, the cheery "Good morning" of the English yokel on my way to the meet; nor do I think, if I lived half a century north of the Tweed, I should get used to the detestable habit of the Scottish cottager of bolting and shutting the door at the sight of a stranger. Especially annoying is this trick if one happens to want to ask the way.

It is this detachment of the Scottish *plebs* from fox-hunting which produces the result that most hunt-servants and even hunting grooms in the country are of English origin.

But I must add that it gives one great advantage to the chase—*there is no holloaing.* Oh! thrice blessed country, no holloaing!

Mr Pomponius Ego, the reader will remember, projected an essay "On Holloas"—I never heard that it was given to a grateful posterity. I have even some recollection of something of that sort in a book called *The Snaffle Papers;* but though a decade and a half has passed since that was written, I cannot flatter the author thereof that he has reduced the number of holloas by one per season. Which of us, however limited may be our hunting experience, but can recollect runs spoilt by clamorous yokels, and even, I regret to say, members of the field? Well, unless my experience is wrongly founded on a thing

that is purely local to the counties where I was, there is no holloaing in Scotland, a fact that alone divides it by an enormous gulf from English provincial sport.

The northern part of our island is not that to which we traditionally go for fun—to put it mildly,—and, indeed, Scottish hunting is a serious business enough. Very few humorous incidents remain in my mind as having been witnessed there, and of these one is perhaps funnier in the recollection than in the telling. Having secured a bad start from one of the few gorse coverts in the country, I came "pasting" downhill towards a post and rails, but concealed from the adjoining field by a bullfinch at right angles thereto. Thus, at the bottom, I came unperceived on a white-haired lady seated on a cob, the said cob being seated also—on his haunches. The lady's crop and tongue were alike busy, and, but that ladies never—well, hardly ever—use the "big, big D," I should surmise that the recording angel was at work. It was evident that the cob had tried to refuse, slipped up, and cannoned "sejant," as the heralds say, into the rails. However, our fox turned out to be a gravid vixen, and not very far on hounds were stopped, so no harm was done.

On another occasion hounds were running smartly when the apparition of an extra high rail-fence, with sharply sloping ground beyond, sent myself and another to the gate at its end, I holding his nag whilst he wrestled with the complicated fastenings. Enter to us one of the young bloods of the chase.

"Bit too much of a drop to that fence," he remarked, "but *I jumped it last year!*"

One peculiarity is common to most if not all Scottish hunting countries, and it is one uncommon in

England: I allude to the fact that they have, on one or more sides, tracts of unhunted and unhuntable country. This is a fact which sometimes leads to great and yet quite unenjoyable runs. Thus, on the 6th of April 1907, the Duke of Buccleuch's hounds, meeting in the extreme west of their country, found a fox who incontinently left it, and ran over grouse moors and hills in such a way as to entirely get rid of the field. He must have given a great run, for the officials did not find the pack till dark, twenty-six miles from home, which was reached at two o'clock on Sunday morning.

Perhaps the best way of giving a reader an idea of the sport in any particular country is to describe one or two days' sport therein, and this I will now attempt to do.

Turning to my hunting diary, I find one or two which may serve. The meet, on the first of them, which took place at a large country house on the outskirts of the county town, was a large one, occurring as it did at the end of a long frost. A move was made to the woods in the policies, where a fox was quickly on foot Now, this particular place is one noted for the facility with which one gets "left" at the start, and on this occasion it did not fail to act up to its reputation. I, however, was this time one of the fortunate ones, for which, by the way, I paid on our next visit to the place a month later, when my share of the run was limited to jogging along with the Hunt second-horsemen till I could pick up hounds for their second draw. On this day it was otherwise. Hounds rattled their fox through unrideable woodlands till he came away "convenient" to my own position. On the grass they simply flew. The fences

were mostly big stone walls, but handily gated, and during the whole run we never touched plough. Four-and-twenty minutes of the best ended in a check, and though things were quickly put right, the pace was distinctly slower for the rest of the run. For one thing, scent was notably inferior in cover, and our fox promptly availed himself of this fact to run through all the many "strips," or fir plantations, which dotted the fields; hounds doggedly stuck to him, and at last drove him into a large covert. The wind was high here, for we were now a good many hundred feet above the woods where we had found, and it was a little difficult to keep with hounds, none the less so as the boggy rides through the wood were extraordinarily deep and rotten after the snow and frost. One, at least, of our number acquired a dirty coat here; but at last we got away on to the grass again, and as I and some others approached the highest point of the hill, our fox came bundling back across it and threw itself into a gorse patch. A hat held up gave the huntsman the office, and hounds, being at fault, were quickly brought over. They failed to hit him off for so long a time that I, for one, thought he had found sanctuary in a rabbit-hole; but at last they were on him, and promptly bowled him over. Time, one hour, and a very cheery hunt.

Horses being changed, a long trot followed. In all countries this is a wearisome proceeding, but nowhere more so than in the lowlands of Scotland, where the badness of the roads has to be seen to be believed. However, in due time we reached a gorse covert on a sheltered hillside; and diligent inquiry found the desired animal at home. At least the first whip's whistle announced that he had "just stepped out,"

and away we went at score over a closely fenced country and down to the banks of what the natives, uncertain whether to say "brook" or "river," call a "water." Up these went the chase, and, as in all bottom lands, the fences were big. Driving through the extensive woods of another country-house, we ran on in the direction of our original meet, but short of it this fox, too, died in the open after a run similar to the other in length.

One more day of a different sort. Leaving the meet, our way this time took us to high-lying wet moors, intersected by those "sheep-drains" whose hidden presence has been responsible for many a fall. Here we came to a large gorse, from which a reluctant fox was at last forced. He circled round, and for a time hounds ran fitfully. Coming down an old "drove road"—the old lines over which for centuries Highland store-cattle made their way to the English pastures—hounds suddenly swung to the right. The enclosing rails stood on a high bank, but it was wide enough to spring from, and some obliging thruster knocking a rood or so of it somewhat towards the ploughed fields we had to land in, made it easy enough. But checks now came; and, finally, it was with the feeling that scent was not up to much that we marked this fox to ground near a railway line. Here he was left, and we rode back to the hills to try again.

Two fir plantations, perhaps the distance of a T.Y.C. apart, were the scenes of our next venture, and one of them held a fox. But, bothered and headed by some second horsemen, he more than once dodged from one to the other. Just as things began to look bad, he slipped away. The fence was an uncompromising stone wall, but fortunately there were rails in one

corner, and away we went down to the cultivated country, where the chase was attended by the cheerful crackling sound of splintering timber which usually accompanies a run in these parts. Hounds ran fast and well, pointing for the largest town in this district, but short of this some intricate fences let us into the grounds of a small house, in whose shrubberies an obviously beaten fox was running short. In another minute it was whoo-whoop! The run had taken seven-and-thirty minutes, of which the odd ones may be knocked off for alarms and excursions between the two coverts before we were fairly off.

On the whole an enjoyable day, and one to me certainly worth the hat which a cropper over a heavegate rendered a negligible quantity, as the French say.

A third fox gave a less satisfactory gallop, for the line of country he took was a poor one; and, finally, putting up a fresh companion, he divided the pack and saved his bacon.

As a rule, the country is one less noteworthy for fast, short gallops like this than for longer but equally satisfactory runs. I think I am not libelling it by calling it not a first-class scenting district. The foxes are good and strong, and the country well stopped, so they have to travel some way to safety, and they *do*. Blank days are unknown, and few days would earn the reprobation of Mr Jorrocks, to whom a day without blood was no day.

A hunting man of a roving turn of mind might distinctly do worse than have a season in Scotland, and I, for one, have brought away pleasant recollections of a sort that make me hope that I may some day revisit its happy hunting-grounds.

CHAPTER XXIX.

AFTER IBEX IN JOURA.

As there are two islands of Joura (or Gioura) on the map of Greece, I had better begin by saying that I do not refer to the ancient Gyaros, near Delos, but to that once known as Gerontia, which lies to the extreme north-east of the modern kingdom of Greece — the farthest of any size in that direction.

The reader may recollect the difficulties I had had in the beginning of the year 1897 to get a permit to shoot on this island at all. This pointed, in my opinion, to the fact that the ibex were carefully preserved, but, as will be seen hereafter, the permit was a farce. Anybody and everybody shoots at Joura. The pity was that I had not gone to the island before the war, as since that period everybody has a Gras rifle, and all game is ruthlessly destroyed; but as to this I shall have something to say in an Appendix.

Flushed with the moderate success we had obtained at Antimilo, where I had had the satisfaction of knowing that if the two bucks I had killed were not extra fine specimens, they were at any rate the largest then on the island, we made our way by the Piræus, and inside the island of Eubœa to Volo, and from Volo to Skopelos. It was a decidedly leisurely voyage—a day

and night at Syra, a day at Piræus, a day at Volo, a night at anchor near Thermopylæ (there being no lights in these waters), and several hours at Chalcis waiting for the favourable time of tide to negotiate the narrow passage of the Negropont, extended it to no less than six days. It was rough nearly all the time, and rough weather on Greek steamboats, and especially with Greek fellow-passengers, is not an enviable experience.

However, it was over at last; and at Skopelos, where we arrived on December 18, Mr Gialeraki's relative, Mr Stergios Stergiou, whom we had advised of our arrival, met us, and carried us off to his house. Here we found an American citizen, a native of Skopelos, who was able to interpret for us. We were obliged to go to his house also, and to that of the local doctor—a great Nimrod, who had a stuffed seal to exhibit, which he said he had shot. He was very anxious to go with us to Joura, and presented V. with a silver cartouche-box in the hope of gaining his end, but our dragoman persuaded him that we had no room in our tent, which was true enough. It did not take us long to come to terms with the skipper of a cutter, whom Mr Stergiou had in waiting, and we arranged to start early next morning. Of course there were endless delays; but at last we did get away, and sailed for Joura. Perhaps I should rather have written "rowed," for the day, though lovely, was one of dead calm, and most of our progress was due to the sweeps which the *Evangelist* carried. Our course lay close along the shores of a chain of small islands, the names of which I have forgotten. Towards night the captain wished to anchor, but we insisted on being at Joura in time

to shoot the next day. When we had put up our camp-beds in the hold, on the shingle which served as ballast, a little breeze sprung up, and we arrived at our destination soon after daylight.

There is no landing-place of any kind at Joura, as far as I saw. The place where we disembarked was all steep rocks, on which we had to jump, watching our opportunity. The landing of baggage is a great difficulty.

The following description of Joura, from the pen of Professor Knotek, who collected there for the Bosnian Museum, and shot a buck, doe, and kid, appeared in 1896 in the *Oesterreichische Först und Jagd-Zeitung*:—

"Joura, the most northerly of the Sporades with the exception of the small, flat, volcanic islet of Psathoura, is roughly of the shape of an isosceles triangle, whose height is thrice the length of the base.[1] This latter, with a small bay in it, is to the south. It is of limestone formation. The southern and western, which are also the most accessible, sides run down in a steep slope, cut up by valleys of varying size, to the sea, whereas a sheer fall of from three to four hundred metres runs along the whole east coast. Fearful precipices, and cliffs one to two hundred metres high, descending in terraces to the sea, countless ravines and clefts, give the whole a wildly romantic appearance. Two parallel ridges, dividing in the centre of the island, shut in a narrow valley running in a north-westerly direction, whilst the main ridge and the more northerly of the above-mentioned

[1] I compared it to the left hand, palm upwards, the bay (our landing-place) being between thumb and forefinger, and several promontories to the westward the fingers.

two enclose a hollow heaped with masses of rock, amongst which a wretched grove of holm-oaks grows. The other grove on the western slopes has been mostly felled. A few valleys running down to the sea give the only, and that a dangerous, means of access to the main ridge, and the numerous and great cliffs, with tracks hardly giving room for the feet, make it impossible for any one not an intrepid, experienced mountaineer to ascend, even with difficulty. How many native sportsmen must have paid for their passion with death here![1]

"The almost inaccessible parts of the east coast are the regular dwelling-places of these ibex, where they shelter from the oppressive heat of the day under rocks, in the numerous hollows, or in the shadow of a leafy bush (*Acer creticum*) or holm-oak. True nocturnal animals, they climb the precipices at sunset, and go into the valleys for their food. Many, however, remain among the precipices, and seek their living on the grassy terraces and slopes. The bushes before referred to, that grow on the precipices, are eaten off as high as the ibex can reach, showing that they are favourite food with these animals.

"In one spot alone, about the middle of the east coast, a blue slate crops out, and in this, close to the sea, a little spring, round which a rock basin has been built, rises.[2] The number of deeply worn game paths

[1] This is somewhat poetical, and in my opinion the writer exaggerates the danger. It is, however, the fact that Pulios, then shepherd at Joura and Knotek's guide, had a fall not long after this visit, and his gun going off wounded him in the chest. He got over this, but only to be imprisoned shortly afterwards for systematic smuggling.

[2] I must confess I saw nothing of this. A pool in the centre of the island, mostly frozen over during our stay, was obviously of such a nature as to be dry in summer.

leading to it shows how the goats use the only fresh water accessible to them.

"Although their flight over the stone heaps and less broken ground is a rapid one, it is not so mad as that of the chamois under similar conditions, nor do they cover so much ground at a single bound.[1] A herd, when going along undisturbed, has, if seen from a distance, an extraordinary resemblance both in colour and movement to a herd of chamois in summer coat, especially when there are no old buck ibex in the herd, so much so that one must really ask oneself whether they are really wild goats or chamois.

"Although the dislike of the ibex for the domestic goat (there are now seven of the latter on the island[2]) is so strong, and the places used by the latter are so carefully avoided by the former, there are certainly some cross-bred goats, and these can be recognised by their light colour.[3] No doubt these are the descendants of escaped tame goats of an earlier day. Only a few years ago there were six to eight hundred ibex on the island, and now there are perhaps two hundred to two hundred and fifty. Although a good many are shot every year, they multiply rapidly in this mild climate, and the time when this species also ceases to exist should be far distant.

"Although the Government prohibits the shooting of these animals, the islet is so remote and unwatched that the inhabitants of the adjoining island of Chelidromia can satisfy their longing for ibex-meat with-

[1] Admitting the last remark to be correct, I still maintain that these ibex and those of Antimilo go quite as fast as a chamois.

[2] There were none in 1898.

[3] I saw one of these light-coloured goats (a buck).

out meeting with any opposition. On certain days of the year great drives take place, in which almost the whole male population of Chelidromia takes part. A part of them cover the passes on the northern ridge, the rest in a long armed line of beaters drive the game up to the north of the island. If the goats turn back from the guns it is to be greeted with volleys from the beaters, and driven on again till they succeed in breaking out. It is lucky for the ibex that the weapons and flint-lock guns and muzzle-loaders are as bad as possible.[1] Besides man, these goats suffer from the eagles—a pair of whom breed every year in an inaccessible eyrie in the cliffs."

Leaving our people to pitch the camp, and the cutter to depart to the neighbouring island of Pelagonisi, where there is a sheltered anchorage (Fiedler, writing in 1834, says of Joura that it had a good harbour, but it certainly no longer exists), we started with our rifles. Twenty minutes took us to the abandoned monastery, which, however, we found inhabited for the time by a woman and her family in charge of the sheep on the island. We found, too, the evidence of the existence of ibex on the island in the shape of the skins and horns of three small bucks hanging in the verandah of the chapel. Encouraged by this sight we proceeded, and half a mile farther on we divided forces, I to skirt the west coast, and my companion to try his luck farther east.

If there was one thing I did not expect to find in Joura, it was roads: but that was just what I did find—miles on miles of bridle-paths, carefully con-

[1] See Appendix B.

structed and with good gradients, leading to almost all parts of the island. So little has labour and trouble been grudged, that in places they are actually supported on timbers driven into the face of the cliff.

For centuries charcoal-burning has been carried on here, and still is, though now only a few scattered trees remain; and the roads have been constructed by the charcoal-burners for the double purpose of collecting their wood and removing their charcoal.

On this beautiful morning I was only too thankful for them, and walked pleasantly along enjoying the scene. In the deep blue sea all around me lay islands, those we had passed the previous day to my left, and backed by a chain of hills covered with snow—those of Eubœa. Straight ahead, over the low islet of Psathoura and its lighthouse, rose a glittering white cone—Mount Athos. On the right, behind some mere rocky islets, was the outline of the large Turkish island of Lemnos.

Unfortunately for my purpose, my frequent spyings with the glass, likely though the ground was, were vain. I crossed a big ravine (the foot of the valley described by Professor Knotek), down which the path was most skilfully traced, and at the bottom of which a pair of doe horns were lying, and then made my way up the opposite face where this path ended. I calculated I had followed it eight miles, but this was probably an overestimate, though it winds much. I now turned to my right, and followed a sheep-track to the eastern side of the island. Here the seaward cliffs are sheer and the ground more promising; but nothing did I see till, coming on my partner's tracks, I realised I was wasting my time, and made for camp,

which I found pitched in a hollow, perhaps a quarter of a mile above our landing-place.

My companion's luck had been as mine, and we were both somewhat despondent, especially when the shepherding family came into camp at night and said they had not seen any goats for a month, and that the charcoal-burners from Skopelos, being armed with breech-loading Gras rifles, had killed them nearly all. Nevertheless, they were confident they could show us some next day.

So, with renewed hopes, we started before eight o'clock on the following morning, taking my path of the day before. Our party consisted of V. and myself, Dimitri, the eldest shepherd boy, and an individual we had brought from Skopelos to make himself useful, but whose *forte* turned out to be eating and sleeping.

Shortly after crossing the big ravine Dimitri dropped like a setter on topping a ridge. We were soon beside him, and saw our first Joura goats—a doe with her kid.[1] The sheep in the ravine staring at us had alarmed her, but not much, so she made her way slowly up the opposite face. The Joura does are very game-looking, and have much of the gazelle about them. Their colour is uniform—chocolate-brown with black stripe on shoulder and back. After having watched them some time we pursued our way. When we reached the last ridge I had attained the day before, where the path ends, Dimitri left us and went on in front to look out. Presently we heard a great rattling of stones, and the boy returned in much excitement, pointing down to seaward. Glasses were out at once, but my partner saw them first.

[1] According to Dr Lorenz Liburnau, the kids of the Joura ibex are born in November, the Antimilo ones in January, the Cretan in May.

"It's only a doe and a kid! Oh! no, it's a herd! There's a good buck!" were his successive exclamations. By this time I had picked them up also. There were eleven in all, and two of them were bucks, with the wide-sweeping divergent horns characteristic of these ibex, but they struck me as more blue-grey than those of Antimilo. Never shall I forget them, and never, alas! did I see them better. They were fully alarmed and at gaze. We decided that a stalk was impossible, and that all we could do was to attempt a drive. We sent the lads to the left to make a circuit and come upon them from behind, and crept forward ourselves towards the beasts. Being on the sunny side of the valley I must have been very conspicuous, for the herd worked away uneasily from me over the sky-line. Here, however, they were met face to face by our beaters, and reappeared, but only to dash at a tremendous pace down to the sea and round the corner, never having been much, if at all, within half a mile of us. I have always felt since that our laziness was to blame for this discomfiture; for if one of us had gone with the men, he would probably have had a chance at the shortest of ranges, for the lads came out right among the herd.

We now sent the "individual" back with a characteristic 24-inch head which I had picked up, and followed the same line as on the previous day. When we reached the eastern cliffs my partner shirked, and left me to go on alone.

Even here at the foot of the cliffs were excellent paths, and when I got nearly to the end of these the lad made a good spy of two bucks in the sheer face of cliff above us. Neither was as good as those of the morning, one being one of the light-coloured ones re-

ferred to by Professor Knotek, but the other was a shootable beast.

Dimitri, in pantomime, suggested a circuit and an approach up one of two or three detached aiguilles of rock in front of us. I accepted his suggestion, not without rather a dismal foreboding of what was to follow; and I was right.

At first the way lay over a succession of moraines, consisting mostly of enormous blocks; but then we had to tackle the sheer rock. I may give some idea of what it was by saying that twice I climbed trees, and swung myself out of their upper branches on to the ledges above, in preference to following my guide. Imagine my disgust at finding, when we finally emerged in a saddle between two points of rock, that we were still a fair rifle-shot from the bottom of the cliff, and the goats were four or five hundred feet above us. Dimitri signed that the shot should be taken, as it would drive the goats downwards; so I put up the last sight and let drive. It had not the desired effect, however, and the bucks soon came to a stand again, looking downwards to see where the danger lay. I fired once more, and at the shot they went on upwards; the best one, at which I had aimed, very awkwardly, but this I attributed to the bad ground. Indeed, from below the cliffs looked almost absolutely sheer.

As we went home through the still evening to camp, the lad drew my attention to a distant sound —the clash of horned heads meeting in conflict. The bucks must have been nearly, if not quite, a mile away; but the noise echoed clearly amongst the hill-tops.

On our return to camp (and our interpreter),

Dimitri insisted that I had broken the leg of the buck at which I had fired. This, if true, was a record for me, for the range must have been nearer five hundred yards than four. I could only regret not having used my glass.

The morning of the 22nd was dull and threatening. Nevertheless we started early—V. to the place where we had seen the big herd, and I, with the boy Dimitri, to that where we had heard the bucks fighting the evening before, which was on the southern side of the big ravine. I had not gone very far before the boy's mother and a small brother, perhaps seven or eight years old, joined us.

About ten o'clock we reached a point on the edge of the great ravine. The woman had left us some time previously, I suppose to look after the sheep. Dimitri now sent his little brother to drive the ground to our left, and presently he pointed out to me two bucks making rather sharply for the big ravine itself. We started to cut them off. Before we had gone far I measured my length, with some ingenuity succeeding in excoriating both wrists, my right knee, and left ankle. However, I consoled myself with the reflection that if I had not had gloves on it would have been worse, as these had saved my hands, and limped on.

In good time, it seemed to me, we reached an outlying spur—a capital position—and took post. Dimitri signalled to the little fellow where to go, and he obeyed perfectly. It seemed a certain shot, but the result was commensurate with all our Joura luck—the beasts had broken out somewhere, and were gone.

The boys then took me to the eastward cliffs, and

then to some ground I had not previously seen, towards the extreme north of the island. Here, however, were a number of charcoal-burners at work, and it was obviously no use expecting game.

I ate my lunch, during which process the woman joined us; and shortly afterwards we made out V. working towards us. We joined forces and wended our way homewards.

My partner said he had seen nothing, but when we reached the ridge where the southern path ended, the shepherds signed to us to wait, whilst the small boy, who was almost as active as a goat himself in the rough ground, went on to reconnoitre. Presently he returned in some excitement, though why, I do not even now know. Dimitri gestured that he would drive the hillside if we went on and took post; and when we agreed he handed my rifle to his mother—the first occasion on which I have had the assistance of a lady *shikari!* Of course I had to endure a good deal of chaff from my partner, but the tables were turned when she pointed out his position and sat down near it, leaving myself and the small youngster to take post lower down.

She certainly was keen enough, for during the drive, as things were not looking very promising, she left V. and went back to the hill-top herself to assist. Both our places were good, and the ground was promising, but very soon the child uttered the inevitable "τιποτα," which was always our fate on Joura. (I do not know if they spell it so, but they pronounce it so; and it means "There is nothing.")

Sadly we went home through pelting rain, and when we got there V. declared himself sick of it. So we lighted the signal fires that were to have

brought our cutter from Pelagonisi, it being arranged that I should have a last try next day, whilst my partner arranged the packing-up and shipping of the things.

The night began badly; our old dragoman and cook let my best cap, which he was drying, fall into the fire, and, when blamed, turned indignantly on me—

"What for you cry out for brandy and water, then?"

But this was a trifle. The wind increased to a gale, with torrents of rain, and unfortunately V. had not brought the outer fly of the tent. A small hole above my head awoke me by dripping on me, and an attempt to repair it by sticking in a copying-ink pencil only changed the stream to one of violet ink. I moved my bed out of the way, but an hour or two later the whole thing descended on my head (I was on the windward side). Shouts of "Thomas!" at last brought the poor fellow out to re-drive tent-pegs; for the "individual" had prudently fled to the monastery.

All through the trip I had suffered from cold, not having given the "isles of Greece" credit for such a winter climate, but this night it was both wet and cold that banished sleep.

V., who was on the lee-side and well provided with fur karosses, did better. Cold and miserable I waited for daybreak; at last it came. Thomas's tent had been down twice, and he was in a miserable plight. The place in which our camp was pitched was ankle-deep in slippery mud, and the very side-pockets of the tent were full of water. Fortunately I had, by a mere accident, not put my telescopes in them as usual.

Tea revived us a little, and then, when the people from the monastery had turned up, we proceeded to remove our things to a great cave close to the landing-place. I can best give an idea of the place by saying that the spot I selected for my bed was about sixty feet from the mouth; at which, by the way, were the remains of the hut built by the last monk of Joura, and in which he lived as a hermit for many years after all his fellows had been simultaneously struck by lightning.

We had now reached something very like the condition of primæval man. Hunters before, we were now troglodytes.

After our things had arrived and we had arranged our tent across the mouth of the cave, we had no occupation for the rest of the day than that of watching the great seas break against the cliffs of the islet of Gramsa, just opposite, or the spindrift driving along the surface of the water, unless it were to avoid the pungent wood-smoke from our fire, which filled every nook and cranny of the cave, or to see V. vainly attempting to hit with his ·303 the cormorants floating amongst the rollers. That night, however, was one not to be forgotten, for the first time this trip I slept warmly and comfortably, lulled by the dripping from the stalactites close to me.

Christmas Eve was as bad a day as one could wish to see. The bitterly keen north wind blew so strongly that the snow, of which the sky was full, could only fall at intervals. Of our cutter there was no hope; we were weather-bound once more. As there was equally little chance of sport, we only went as far as the monastery, and visited the little chapel, where the skulls of the last monks of Joura are collected.

Meanwhile starvation stared us in the face, for all our stores, and even our wine, were run out. Our tea, too, having been only packed in paper, had lost its savour, and even after the desperate expedient of boiling it for a quarter of an hour, it only tasted of tin cup and condensed milk. That day we had some salt ibex, which tasted like indiarubber, and still more briny olives, which the shepherds brought us. Fowls they refused us, as they were required for breeding purposes; but we were desperate and ordered a raid. Our men brought back two antediluvian specimens, for which we afterwards paid famine prices.

Christmas Day was nearly as bad as the day previous. V., who had killed two lions on this anniversary the year before, cursed his luck and refused to go out. The wind was bitter, and it snowed most of the day. I got as far as the monastery, and stayed there till I was thoroughly chilled waiting for Dimitri. At last I started off, thinking he would follow. Of course he never did, and never had had any intention of facing the cold.

I worked along the path by the big ravine, seeing nothing but a hobby and a pretty little rock-creeper, grey in front and black behind. About one o'clock I ensconced myself among some bushes to eat my frugal lunch. Till then I had not realised the extent of the cold, but in about a quarter of an hour I found I could stand it no longer, and hurried on. It took me quite twenty minutes' sharp climbing before the circulation in my hands was sufficiently restored to have enabled me to use my trigger-finger. However, the occasion did not arise, and I made my way onwards over the frozen ground, where the snow now lay pretty thickly in sheltered places, to the eastern cliffs.

Here I continued my careful spying, but in vain. About three o'clock, on looking through a gap in the cliffs, my attention was attracted by a peculiar cry from a wooded hollow below me, and a doe, repeating the same note, and followed by her kid, sprang on a rock some hundred and fifty yards away. Much as meat was wanted in camp, I could not bring myself to fire. Moreover, I hoped a buck would follow, but none did. The doe leaped down and disappeared, then she crossed a piece of absolutely bare reddish ground, repeating her alarm signal about every minute. Although I had this to guide me, and my glass open and ready in my hand, I failed to catch sight of the goats again. This shows the difficulty of finding these animals before they themselves see the stalker.

The fact that these goats have an alarm-note in itself marks a distinction between them and the ibex of Antimilo. I have fired some five or six times at members of a herd on the latter island, and alarmed, or seen them alarmed, in other ways quite as often, and have also fired at, or alarmed, single animals, but never, I am positive, heard any sound from any of them.

The cry of the Joura goat is difficult to describe: though distinctly animal in its nature, it in a considerable degree resembles the note of some kind of wild goose, heard at considerable distance. It also suggests the sound produced by the mechanically-squeaking dogs of our childhood: while the way the animal repeated it from time to time in moving along recalled the action of an alarmed roebuck.

After this I saw nothing more: indeed the heavy snow-clouds made it grow dark very early. V., who

had got tired of inaction, was out when I reached the cave, but soon returned, having seen nothing.

Our Christmas dinner was simple; it consisted of chicken broth, and chicken out of the broth, which was so tough as to be uneatable. There was also a tin of pears left. V. washed this meal down with tea such as I have described, but I preferred not to adulterate my water. Then we divided our last drop of brandy and our last two cigars, and went to bed.

Next morning, to our delight, we were able to embark, and left Joura about half-past nine. It was indeed not quite calm, though a Channel boatman would have called it a lovely day. Our skipper, however, looked at things from a different point of view, and we could not induce him to make for Skyros direct. He said he did not want to be drowned. As a compromise, he ran down to the island of Skantzoura with a beam wind, and anchored there about one, when we landed and made our way to the monastery.

Though Skantzoura is, like Joura, a limestone island with, indeed, a great deal of marble, the vegetation of the two differs greatly. Here the higher ground was covered with heather of two different kinds and dwarf coniferæ, none of which are to be seen at Joura. On our way we met a large herd of goats, and both agreed that they in no way suggested the animals we had been hunting.

The monastery—a very good house, with a chapel of the usual pattern, in which by the way were some very suggestive skulls, one split almost in two by a sword-stroke, and another perforated by a musket-ball—was deserted; but on our way back we met the caloyer, or monk, and procured some eggs and some

very resinous wine from him. He told us that the steamer for Piræus left Skyros on the following afternoon. Consequently our skipper promised to sail at midnight, which he did; and when we emerged from the hold at seven o'clock we found ourselves not many miles from our destination.

Our steamer turned up punctually, and sailing immediately, reached Laurium at two the next morning. Here she waited no less than twenty-two hours, and then on a lovely afternoon steamed round Cape Colonna into the Piræus, and we reached the Grand Hotel at Athens in time for dinner.

Within a week we had left Greece, going different ways, I back to London, and V. to Assam and Baltistan, where I am glad to know he had better sport than on the island of Joura.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE WOODLAND PYTCHLEY.

The Woodland, or North, Pytchley, is a peculiar country, being *in* the Shires, yet not *of* the Shires. Few countries, too, lend themselves less readily to general description, as there is an immense difference between one part of it and another. As regards much of it, it is justly described as "Woodland," but there are parts of it which really suffer from a lack of coverts. Taking it all round, it may be described as a poor-scenting country, and one which requires great qualities in huntsman and hounds if sport is to be had. It is well, in parts almost over, foxed; and, generally speaking, badly stopped. It was my fate to see a good deal of the sport of three seasons there (though, to be sure, I began late in one, and finished another two months before its end). Altogether, however, I saw some hundred and twenty days, of which a score have the word "good" appended to them in my diary.

The Market Harborough country is "Shires" pure and simple, big grass fields with much ridge and furrow, divided by large, often enormous, fences, and containing, except at Dingley, only one covert. Unfortunately it is heavily wired, and also suffers by

the fact of being bounded by railways and by the Welland, so that foxes rarely cross the Pytchley border, and never Mr Fernie's.[1] This throws them back on great woodlands—Brampton, Carlton, and Pipewell—the latter two almost contiguous. The Kettering country is almost all woodland, Broughton, Geddington, Grafton, Snapes, and Farming woods being only divided, as it were, by strips of grass. On the Wellingborough side again there is less wood and more plough; and the Woodford country has of late years afforded good sport. Lastly, we have a piece on the Gretton side with little wood, but shading off through the Deene and Harringworth woodlands to the great jungles of Laxton and Wakerley. Scattered throughout the middle of the country comes the increasing nuisance of ironstone workings. Certainly no man could wish a more difficult country to hunt, and the killing of foxes can only really be successfully done on the "let 'em alone system"; but as the rural population is both enthusiastic and leather-lunged, hounds must be as indifferent to shouting as the Llangibby to take no notice of the frequent holloas. Indeed, I have often thought that a pack of that sort might show more sport here than the beautiful bitches they actually have.

Things being so, it is not difficult to fix on the Market Harborough country as that which shows most sport; and I find various days recorded which were marked by stirring gallops, such as that on which the bitches "screamed" a fox to death in twenty minutes from Wilbarston New Covert, follow-

[1] Chapter xxiv. proves that they sometimes reverse this procedure; and as a matter of fact, these hounds recently had a good run into Mr Fernie's country.

ing this up by thirty-five minutes, with one check, from Dingley to ground in the railway embankment by Braybrooke, and ending the day in heavy rain by a nice hunt from Hermitage Wood.

Better still, perhaps, was the day which began with an hour from Dingley towards Stoke; but, turning over the bottom, hounds tore the hill towards Sutton Barrett, and ran by Ashley and Wilbarston New Covert towards Mr Fernie's country, and had to confess defeat under Galliborough Clump.

Our second fox was bolted from a drain below Carlton Park, and ran by Wilbarston New Covert and Wilbarston Village towards Pipewell, but turning up-wind hounds drove him through Brampton and Hermitage Woods, and lost him short of Dingley.

Perhaps my best day—and I do not forget the remark that the goodness of a day depends on the place the narrator held—was also in this country and just about a year later. A fox from Wilbarston New Covert ran a left-handed semicircle to Dingley, and then past (up-wind) across the Brampton Bottom under Wilford's Lodge to the New Covert again.

From thence he went to Stoke Albany Church, and beat hounds below Wilford's. After this a fox from the Warren ran by Dingley and Hermitage Wood into the Pytchley country nearly to Waterloo Gorse, not far from which he beat hounds. As so often happens, after a good scenting day, the diary records of the following one: "Sharp frost: too hard: hounds sent home."

To show, however, that fast gallops are not confined to this part of the country, I will record a last day of

the season, a Laxton meet and a large crowd from other Hunts which had finished. Everything looked unpromising; and by four o'clock we had done practically nothing, when a fox went away from Deenethorpe Spinney towards the village, and being headed, turned sharp along the hill above Bulwick and down over the brook, which stopped everybody except a lady on a grey, John Isaac, and one other man. But they gained little; for a short check let the field up, and half an hour's run ended by Laxton Village.

I may say, however, that none of these were typical Woodland runs, such as was that of the 30th of December 1890, when they found at the Hermitage Wood; ran by Pipewell and Weekley Hall Wood, and killed in Geddington Village, doing the seven-mile point in three-quarters of an hour.

The following is perhaps a more unusual style of hunt. Finding in Weekley Hall Wood, notably a poor-scenting covert, it was some time before they could force their fox away. Presently, however, he crossed the valley and the iron-stone workings, and leaving Newton village to his right, ran by Little Oakley and the Sart nearly to Geddington Chase. Here he must have been headed, for he turned suddenly back to the Sart and the village, and went up the hill to Oakley Purlieus. In this extensive wood he kept hounds busy for some time, but at last he broke over the railway towards Corby Village, and was killed in the open, the run having occupied an hour and three quarters.

It was in the Woodland Pytchley country that poor Goodall handled his very last fox, hounds killing him in the village street of Stoke.

CHAPTER XXXI.

HOW I BECAME AN OUTLAW.

I SUPPOSE one great object of every real boy's ambition is to become an outlaw. If any boy does not possess that desire at some period of his existence, then, to quote the immortal Jorrocks, "I wouldn't give tuppence a dozen for such beggarly boys—not if they gave me a paper bag to put them in." The outlaw of a boy's fancy, however, is generally a gallant youth, with curling locks and an eagle eye, neatly but tastefully equipped in a jerkin of Lincoln green, with tight-fitting inexpressibles tucked into funnel-topped boots, and a cap with an eagle's feather. His quiver and bugle-horn must be hung from his shoulders, and his hand grasps a stout bow of English yew, with which he can send his arrows so deftly as to cleave a willow wand at fourscore paces. Thus accoutred, he lives gaily on the deer of the usurping Norman, eked out occasionally with the contents of the abbot's purse. Such trifles as house or bed he appears to dispense with, but a comely maiden of the Maid Marian type is ever ready to dress the stolen buck, and, generally speaking, to attend to his comforts. Judging from some shooting trips of my own without much baggage in wild countries, the doublet and hose of a man who invariably sleeps in the open must give

her no little trouble to keep in repair. As to what happens when the gay outlaw's locks begin to get a bit thin on the top, and when he learns from experience what rheumatism is, fiction says not; nor does the boy inquire.

When the boy gets older he becomes aware of the existence of a very different type of outlaw—quite up-to-date. Instead of the greenwood, the haunt of this specimen is generally a second-class Continental watering-place. Sometimes he is a harmless specimen —a bankrupt of good family, who has nothing to gain by the whitewashing process, or, to go rather lower on the scale, one who would not care to go through that *mauvais quart d'heure* with the Official Receiver. The still lower orders are numerous, ending with that of those guilty of crimes at which even the gorge of men of vicious lives rises, and whom it is thought better to leave in exile than to bring back to a punishment, however merited, the infliction of which would flood the newspapers with the recital of their infamy.

Then the lad ceases to wish to be an outlaw.

I had long ceased to do so when I became one, and as my *species* (to speak scientifically) is equally foreign to any of the above-mentioned classes—although, by the way, the Forest of Arden enters into the matter —the story may bear telling. It happened thus. In the late autumn of the year 18— I had made my way to the Grand Duchy of Luxemburg. Most of us, I fancy, would never have heard of this State but for certain diplomatic excitements some decades back, so I may as well explain that this little country is a survival of the map of Europe of the 'forties. It is a complete, compact, and independent little

realm. Though only about the size of a small English county, it has its own sovereign, its own archbishop, its own parliament, and its own army (four companies). It has, too, its own Chancellor of the Exchequer — the happiest being of his kind in the world, for is he not confronted with a perpetual surplus, which not even the most ingenious methods of wasting public money can convert into a deficit? It was, however, its *fauna* which attracted me to the country, or rather, such of them which can no longer be found in our English woodlands—the wolf and the boar, but especially the latter. As a matter of fact, I found that the descriptions, on the faith of which I had gone there, were greatly over-coloured. I had pitched my tent—or, more literally, taken rooms in an old *château*—in the town of F——. At an early period of my stay I had discovered that the native sportsman by no means extends the same welcome here to the wandering Britisher that he meets with in most European countries.[1] Although there was plenty of poaching everywhere, I very soon learnt that the attention of the local forester was concentrated upon my doings—no doubt with a view to *backsheesh*. I need hardly say that I laughed at the idea, as I confined my operations strictly to my own shooting, except on the few occasions on which I was invited elsewhere. Nevertheless, as far as extraordinary sport went, it was a winter thrown away.

The season was over, and I was thinking of recommencing my wanderings when a Prussian forester sent me a little dachshund bitch on trial. One day I had been for a walk, and was returning by the high-road, when my attention was drawn to an angry

[1] A conspicuous exception is described in chapter xiii.

barking on a rocky bank not thirty yards away. I naturally went to the spot, and found the little bitch and my own two dogs at the mouth of a badger-earth. Whether the animal was surprised in making a new abode or not I cannot say, but the fact is it was not a foot from the surface, and in its rushes upon the dogs it exposed its head to view every minute. I left the dogs there and made for the *château*, then about a mile away. As soon as I had reached it I took my gun and two cartridges (one buckshot and one ball) and returned to the scene of action. I found matters there, as I had expected, unchanged. The next time the grey-and-white stripped head appeared, I let drive with the buckshot. Contrary to my expectation, the badger at once bolted, and, going to the left, made for a second earth higher up, with the dogs in hot pursuit. As it crossed a very steep bank its powers failed it, and it rolled to the bottom. A terrific worry ensued. At last the badger broke away and passed me, giving me an opportunity to make a bad miss at five yards' range with a ball. The dogs soon closed again, but the difficulty now was to despatch the brute. Finally it succumbed. It was an enormous and very old female, almost toothless. To this last circumstance I attribute the dogs escaping with as little injury as they did. I secured its legs with my gun-sling and started for home, but before I had gone very far I found the weight intolerable, so at one of the first cottages I reached I chartered a man with a barrow, and we proceeded triumphantly through the town. I made no secret of the matter in any way, and even sent for a local butcher to skin the beast. Herewith I supposed the matter to be at an end.

Two days later my good friend the Brigadier of Gendarmerie knocked at my door. I provided him with a cigar and a drink, and then asked him to what I was to attribute the pleasure of his visit.

"*Mon Capitaine*," said he, "did you shoot a badger two days ago?"

Good heavens! Was that what he'd come about? (What a difference from the phrase in the newspaper reports at home—"Warned the accused not to say anything, as it might be used against him!")

"If I did," I replied, "and should not have done, you wouldn't expect me to incriminate myself, would you?"

"Come, come, we know all about it."

"The devil doubt you," I thought, "considering half the town saw me bring it home."

"Yes," he continued, "it was the old forester who lodged the complaint, and I am afraid they'll prosecute you."

"What for?"

"For shooting in the close season."

"But badgers aren't game."

Whereat he shrugged his epaulettes and took his leave.

Sure enough, some days after this I received a citation to appear at Luxemburg to answer the charges of (1) shooting out of season, and (2) causing game (*sic*) to be transported in the close season. When the appointed day arrived the old forester was the first witness (?). His evidence would, I think, have been the death of an English lawyer. He had heard I had shot a badger; he had been told I had hurried home and returned with a gun; people said I had brought a badger back, &c. Yet my

avocat, who was said to know his business, and who certainly made a rattling defence, never objected to all this hearsay. All the "evidence" really given by this witness was that, having gone to the spot next day, he had found in the snow footprints of men and dogs and some blood.

The second witness was the peasant whose wheelbarrow I had requisitioned, and who was in an abject state of funk. He avowed his share in the iniquitous transaction, and prayed the court to believe he acted in ignorance. I suppose he was dismissed as "Grand Duke's evidence."

Then up stepped my friend the Brigadier. Now, I thought, the court will hear how above-board and simple the whole matter was. Imagine my horror when he began: "On the —th inst., from information received, I visited the accused. At first he was inclined to deny the offence, but afterwards confessed," &c. This was my friendly chat. Still, I felt sure my counsel would very soon tear this web to pieces. The State Prosecutor spoke first, and demanded that all the rigours of the law should be let loose upon my devoted head,—but this, I understand, these officials always do.

Then Maître —— rose to reply. He certainly had an easy task; but he did it well. He began by saying that, granted that I was guilty, it was obviously not a case to press. I was a foreigner, and my conduct had been perfectly simple and above-board, and I had obviously acted in ignorance. He then attacked the charge. "The law," he said, "provides that the shooting of game shall end on a certain fixed day; and we do not deny that after this date my client shot a badger. But, gentlemen, the law has been

careful to specify what animals are protected by this section. On the list of these we do not find the badger any more than the wolf, the boar, or the fox. Who does not know that the badger is a noxious animal? The man who kills one in the wine districts is a public benefactor." He then quoted statutes and precedents, and went on to the second charge. "My client is also accused of causing game to be transported. But I have already quoted the section defining what is game, and shown that the word 'badger' does not occur there." After some more precedents he wound up by adjuring the court to dismiss me "without a stain upon my character."

I certainly did not see how they could do otherwise, and so I was considerably surprised when the president said, "The court will reserve its decision."

About a week afterwards I received a note from my *avocat*. I was pronounced guilty and sentenced to a fine of one hundred francs on the first charge, and to a fine of fifty francs on the second charge, and also to pay all costs of the suit. Three £5 notes (which was about what it all came to) were, I admit, an object to me in those days—indeed, they still are—but I can honestly say that it was not the money that influenced the decision I came to, but the feeling that the whole thing was a "do," and would never have happened to a native, and, above all, the natural British sensation that I had not had a fair trial, because, whatever element of doubt the complicated code might have involved the first charge in, the second was absolutely clear. My mind was soon made up. Within twenty-fours of receiving the letter I had left F——, without making a P.P.C. call on my friend the Brigadier. A couple of hours later I

remarked to a honeymoon couple who shared my *coupé*, "I believe we have crossed the frontier?"

"*Oui, monsieur*," was the answer, "*vous êtes en Prusse.*" And they resumed their somewhat embarrassing demonstrations of mutual affection.

That is how I became an outlaw—from the Grand Duchy of Luxemburg.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE FITZWILLIAM.

It has been my privilege to see a great number of different packs of hounds in the field—indeed, the total approximates to three figures,—but there has been none amongst them to compare, to my mind, with the Milton hounds; and I have often said I would rather have a bad day with Barnard's mixed pack—for the grandeur of the dog-hounds is such one does not willingly lose it, even for the beauties of the bitches—than a good one in some countries. Yet, when I turn to what the Bad Boy called "dere diary," I find that, living for three seasons in a country bordering on the Fitzwilliam, and being within half a dozen miles of their nearest meets, my total number of days with this famous pack fails to reach double figures; and, alas! there is not a real good day amongst those nine. This, of course, is my personal bad luck—the more so as on one day, when everything looked promising, they were shooting to the north and to the south of the country we were in, with the result that twice as soon as the hounds had settled down to run really well, they had to be stopped. So that probably the best, though certainly not the most pleasant, day I put in with them was an

hour's hunt in a terrific gale, and probably in their very worst country. But when you can scarcely help being blown out of the saddle you cannot really enjoy a hunt. As I have owned to never having dropped in for a good day with Mr Fitzwilliam, it may seem presumptuous of me to say that for real enjoyment you must hunt with him on an indifferent scenting one. But what I mean is this: any hounds, as Beckford says, can drive on a good scent, so that, even if you see the Milton bitches "screaming" a fox to death in under half an hour, you'll only see (and you'll have to be well mounted and a "customer" to be near enough to see anything) what you can see, more or less, with every other pack in the Shires and—low be it breathed—in a more pleasant riding country.

But on a poor-scenting day, to see the Fitzwilliam come away from one of the interminable woodlands in the north of their country *with their hackles up*, and commence to run solemnly and doggedly, hunting at times over the "goose to a square mile" white grasses, or the equally bad-scenting stone-walled ploughs south of Stamford town, at a pace that you need hardly do more than trot to live with, and then driving away, as the scenting conditions improve, forcing their fox for a couple of miles through woodland, and pressing him at last across some better land, till they break him up with a sort of solemn satisfied look which seems to imply that they had not their hackles up for nothing an hour before.

Surely Whyte-Melville had—the remark is as far as I am concerned original, but of course it may have been made in print before,—surely when the master-hand traced the lively description of the Castle

Cropper Hounds, in his book, *Inside the Bar*, Whyte-Melville has the Milton pack in mind. This is what he says of them :—

"The hounds are beyond all praise. . . . In the best part of a century, a uniform height, an equal excellence, and a family likeness are to be attained with constant perseverance and unlimited expense. From generation to generation the Earls of Castle Cropper have devoted their leisure, their money, and their attention to this favourite hobby. The present successor may well be satisfied with the result.

"They are rather large, solemn-looking hounds, extremely rich in colour—the dark and tan, both in dogs and bitches, predominating.[1] They have a strong family likeness in the depth of their girth, the width of their loins, and the quality of the timber on which they stand. You might seek through the kennels at the Castle for a summer's day without finding a pair of legs that were not straight and square as a dray-horse's, with feet as round as a cat's.

"In hunting they run well together, without flashing to the front; and although other hounds may seem to make their way quicker across a field, the Castle-Croppers keep continuously on over a country, seldom *hovering*, as it is called, for a moment, and carrying the scent with them, as it were, in defiance of all obstacles. Old Hawk assists them but little, and holloas to them not at all. These hounds are never seen with ears erect and heads up, waiting for

[1] Perhaps it is unnecessary to say it, but *dark* colouring is not a characteristic of the Milton pack, which has enough light-coloured hounds to look "homely" to one hailing from the Marches of Wales.

information. If they want to know where their fox is gone, they put their noses down and find out for themselves. Also, they come home with their sterns waving over their backs; and, finally, I cannot describe their uniformity of appearance and general strength and efficiency better than by saying that the bitches are so like the dogs you can hardly tell one pack from the other but by the shriller music of its tones."

Here, too, is his description of their country :—

"The surrounding district for many miles would gladden a sportsman's heart. There are large wild pastures, all overgrown with rushes and not half drained, that cannot fail to carry a scent. The arable land is badly cultivated and badly cared for; boys never combine the scaring of crows and the heading of foxes in this favoured region, and when you do see a plough it is generally lying stranded in an unfinished furrow, deserted by man and horse. Large woods, with deep clay ridings, holding no end of foxes, lie at intervening distances from each other, to afford a succession of famous gallops and a certainty of hounds being left to work for themselves. . . . The field is usually small in number, consisting principally of hard-riding farmers and the lords of the soil."

The above is to some extent a fancy picture, for if farmers in an arable country conducted their business on such lines they would very soon find themselves unable to hunt at all; and, as our writer truly says, the farmers form a large part of a Fitzwilliam field. Moreover, there is a *lot* of arable in the country; and the worst of all is that, unless the country is *wet*, scent is generally poor. In other

words, when hounds can run hard horses can barely live with them. For this reason I prefer to be on the top of the ground, and see these hounds *hunt* their fox. But to the mere riding man the pleasure, I admit, is doubtful.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE IBEX OF IBERIA.

Being always in quest of sport with the rifle in places where few Englishmen have preceded me, I was naturally greatly struck with the glowing account of sport in Portugal contained in a book which appeared some years ago in England. This book was edited by a member of the Zoological Society, and the Portuguese article it contained was signed by a nobleman well known as a member of the Royal Household and a constant companion of the late King, whose sporting proclivities were also a matter of common knowledge. Such an article in such a book must admittedly rank as authoritative, and as such I took it, and decided to try for a Portuguese ibex—a trophy which, as far as I know, no English sportsman can show. Before going, however, I made use of the usual method—that is to say, I wrote to our Consul at Oporto, and, as usual, received a prompt and careful reply. Mr Honorius Grant, the Acting-Consul at the time, said that there certainly had been at no very distant period some ibex in the Gerez Mountains in the extreme north of the country, and in fact one had been captured there

alive some years previously. He could not say, however, that they still existed there, and I must be prepared for disappointment.

Now it so happened that those very Gerez Mountains were named in the article to which I referred as the habitat of the Spanish ibex (*C. pyrenaica*) in Portugal; and not only this, but the writer proceeded to describe the native method of hunting them there, which, although it struck me as one very unlikely to be very successsful, also seemed to me to be one exceedingly unlikely to be adopted in a district where the intended object of pursuit was at all uncommon.

Wishing to make myself as sure as possible about the matter, I wrote also to the author of *Wild Spain*, and asked him for information. He kindly replied that he really knew nothing about Portugal, but that if the ibex really existed there it seemed to him to be more likely to be found in the highest mountains of the country—the Estrella Range,—which, too, are a continuation of those Spanish Sierras where it is known to exist, whereas the Gerez Range is an offshoot of the Cantabrian Mountains, where it is not found. I myself had exactly the same idea about the matter, and I therefore wrote to the noble writer of the article which had first drawn my attention to Portugal, and put Mr Chapman's theory to him. In reply I received the following letter:—

"Sir,—In answer to your letter, I must tell you that the ibex can only be found in the Serra do Gerez, and therefore, in order to go shooting, you had better make your headquarters in the Grand Hotel do Gerez. If the hotel should

not be open during the winter, you may, perhaps, hire a villa.—Your obedient servant,

"_____."

Nothing could be clearer than this. Moreover, I unearthed in the Library of the Natural History Museum a long article in the *Proceedings of the Madrid Academy of Science*, from which it appeared that sufficient specimens had been obtained from the Gerez Mountains to warrant Don Barbozo de Bocage in forming a theory that these animals formed a separate species — a theory which he afterwards abandoned.

Accordingly I sailed for Oporto in high hopes of bagging an animal of decidedly more than average interest—hopes which, after my arrival, were soon crushed. In the first place, I found that by an Act of Parliament all shooting was prohibited in the Forest of Gerez, comprising a large part of the range. Secondly, I was informed—whether truly or not, I cannot say — that a Government reward of £12 (a large sum for a Portuguese peasant) had been offered for a specimen of an ibex killed in the country, and that this offer had for years gone begging. Thirdly,— and this time my information was undoubtedly correct, — that some years previously an Englishman had come to Oporto on this very quest, had gone to the Gerez, had employed an enormous number of beaters, and spent money like water without getting a shot. My informant added that the beaters claimed to have seen three ibex; but under the circumstances I should say the animals in question were probably roe-deer.

Lastly, Dr Bernardo Ayres, Professor of Zoology

and Head of the Natural History Museum at the University of Coimbra, wrote to me: "*C. hispanica* is here represented by two specimens — one young, and the other an adult male with horns 20 inches long. There is also a photograph of a female, captured in 1890 near the habitation of the guards of the Serra do Gerez, which was probably in very bad health to let itself be caught. After that year I do not know of any other specimen having been caught or killed in the country."

I think it is hardly necessary for me to say that I did not journey up to the Gerez Mountains.

The bad luck that had prompted my coming out to Portugal remained with me to the end, for, when I had passed the whole winter in the country with the intention of going on to Spain as soon as the snow was sufficiently melted for me to try my luck in the mountains, and had found a companion who knew Spain well, I received a telegram at dinner at beautiful Busaco on the eve of my departure for Avila: "Tents not arrived." Within a few weeks I had left Portugal.

There is a sequel to this story. After my departure from Portugal my tents did arrive in Spain, where, I may add, they were promptly forfeited to Government, a packet of rifle cartridges having been detected by the Custom-house searchers inside an old boot—an excellent arrangement which had been made by a Levantine camp-servant of mine at the end of an earlier trip. However, not much harm was done, as they were put up to auction and the entire camp outfit bought in by my friend for some forty shillings!

Having thus the necessary paraphernalia on the spot, it seemed a pity not to make another effort after the ibex in the country where they certainly did exist. My friend had been to the neighbourhood of the Sierra de Gredos, and had spied out the land. So we settled to try our luck there.

Alas! before the date on which I had arranged to leave England, he received information that the landowners of the Sierra de Gredos had joined together to hand over their sporting rights to the King of Spain, and that the range in future was to form a Royal preserve. A visit to the Spanish Embassy in London was fruitless. "You might as well," said one of the secretaries, "ask for a day's shooting in Windsor Forest." With great regret our proposed trip had to be abandoned.

It seems certain, therefore, that the ibex of the Peninsula will never again be shot by an English sportsman, unless, indeed, as the guest of royalty. The Pyrenees may be taken as hopeless. A friend of mine, who spends his life in the pursuit of the great game, has made several trips thither without seeing an ibex. There may still be a few, but it is certainly not worth any one's while to go there. Their haunts in the Sierra de Nevada are in private hands. In the Sierra de Ronda, where brother officers of mine used to go from Gibraltar to shoot them in my earliest soldiering days, they are long since extinct. If they exist in the Sierra Morena there might be a possible chance in those mountains, but I have no record of

their existence there later than that of Martinez y Reguera in 1881.

In 1848 Schimper made the first step towards the scientific classification of this animal, in establishing the fact that it was not identical with the Alpine ibex (*C. ibex*); and in 1851 it was properly differentiated from that animal by H. R. Schinz, Professor of Zoology at Zurich, in his *Monographie der Säugethiere.*

Later on an attempt was made to divide the Peninsular goats by making a new species of those of the Serra do Gerez in Portugal, before referred to in this article, and this was at the Session (October 16, 1856) of the Royal Academy of Sciences of Lisbon, where Senhor Barbozo de Bocage presented and read a paper upon the *Mountain Goat of Serra do Gerez*, which he then believed to be a new species of ibex much resembling the Spanish goat. The differences that he alleged to exist were, however, of an unimportant nature; and not long afterwards, on the advice of Graello, he recanted his opinions in an *Addition to the Preceding Memoir.*

I do not think that even Graello, although he objected to the division into species of the goats of Lower and Central Spain and of Portugal, ever contemplated "lumping" those of the Pyrenees with them. It is, however, now universally admitted that there is only one species throughout the Peninsula — *C. pyrenaica vel hispanica.* It seems probable that its range will soon be confined to the Royal preserve above referred to. If so, we shall have the singular fact that the

only two species of the ibex family found in Europe will owe their continued existence to the sovereigns of the two Latin kingdoms in which they are respectively found. In speaking of them as members of the ibex family, however, I am not scientific, for the Spanish wild goat is really not an ibex, but belongs to the family of *ture*, or sheep-like goats.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

WITH MR FERNIE.

Of the South Quorn, as these hounds were known in Mr Tailby's day and before, I by no means saw as much as I could have wished, nor did I see them in their best country. Though they were nominally accessible from where I was then living, any meet left but little change, in distance, out of a dozen miles, and never did I leave off nearer home than where I commenced. Nor was it my fate to drop in for any of those famous runs with which Thatcher has made hunting history of late; indeed, more than this, on a certain 9th of March of driving hail-storms, it happened to me to sit by Nevill Holt on a very lame horse and see hounds go away from covert with a rattle that was the commencement of a good hunt. My first days were not great ones, the best of them perhaps being that on which we had a hunting run from Watson's Gorse by Nevill Holt, the pace improving thence, to Slawston. From Slawston they ran a cracker to Hallaton, and some of the steep banks facing north were horribly dangerous from the frost. The end of the first hour saw them at Keythorpe Lodge, and thence our fox turned left-handed across the valley and circled

round to Keythorpe village, and crossed the valley once more—a turn which let in nine-tenths of the field, which had consisted of very few indeed at Keythorpe Lodge. Another half-hour had thus been consumed, and now we had a muddling hunt for yet another hour, the fox beating hounds by the tunnel near Allexton.

Regardful of the best part of a score of miles before me, I now turned homewards, but I might almost as well have stayed, for finding (surely not fresh finding) at Allexton they ran straight back to Holt Wood, and killed there.

It was about a year later (thirteen months, to be exact) that I had another good gallop with these hounds. The first fox from Watson's Gorse was lost at Medbourne village. The second, however, from the same gorse, showed more enterprise, and crossed the Welland. This, I read somewhere recently, was once jumped by one of the heroes of the past, but none of a large Leicestershire field looked at it on this occasion, and being familiar with the way, I had the pleasure of acting pilot across the bridge and two railways into Northamptonshire. We met hounds crossing the Carlton road, and they drove along over the ridge and furrow and big fences to the left of Wilbarton New Covert towards the Brampton bottom. Here the fox bent right-handed, and came up amongst the unfortunately much-wired fences above Wilford's. Here also I came into a field to see a fine sheep cast on its back, and had sore misgivings that it was my duty to jump off and lend a hand. But "the pace was too good to enquire," and I left him to possible foot spectators. Short of Five Lanes they bent to the right once more, and hounds

fairly screamed across the Welland into their own country again, the field clattering through Weston village. We had pretty well done with the grass now, which was hard on horses, and along the arable we went to Medbourne, and thence, by grass once more, to Watson's Gorse, the leading hounds topping the fence in exactly three-quarters of an hour from the find by my watch. The papers gave it ten minutes more, but this included the time before this beaten fox was killed in the gorse. It was of course an absolute circle—its only demerit as a run, which, taking it altogether, was the best I saw with these hounds, though I had some more useful sport, with a bit more jumping (in which this run, owing to wire, was deficient), with them a year later.

I have heard some would-be judges "crab" Mr Fernie's hounds, but to me they seemed as good as they ought to be, and this, considering the time the Master has had them, the trouble and care he has had with them, and the years that have elapsed since he first won at Peterborough, means a good deal. As a huntsman Thatcher is as good as he can be; I have never seen a better man since the Goodalls' day. He fairly surprised me one day by handling a Watson's Gorse fox, which I thought had beaten him a quarter of an hour before, near East Norton. I have said I do not know the better part of the country, but what I do know I liked, for the reason that it always rides fairly light even when Northamptonshire is hock-deep. I admit the hills are a bit trying at times, and a horse has to be both well-bred and fit to keep near hounds up there. Unfortunately there is too much wire, much more than there should be for such a Master, for it would,

as I have already said in another chapter, be hard to find one more universally popular. It was always a grief to me to see him riding quietly along in mufti—the kit typifying his intention no more to compete for the forward place he formerly held—and this feeling I am sure was shared by all present, who knew him far better than I did. Few men would be public-spirited enough to continue to hold office under these circumstances, and one can only hope for his complete recovery.

CHAPTER XXXV.

MOUFFLON-STALKING IN CYPRUS.

A TRIP to Cyprus had been a project of ours for years, and we had in fact gone so far in 1896 as to engage our steamer-passages from Corfu, where we were at the time. A severe attack of illness rendered our plans futile on that occasion, and the two following winters were otherwise occupied—one as the reader has already seen.

In 1899 the ground at last seemed clear, except for the quarantine involved by the existence of plague in Egypt, which appeared to make Cyprus inaccessible from England except by the most circuitous routes, such as that *viâ* Beyrout.

We had already made some preparations, but were hesitating to take the final steps till a letter from Trieste informed us that the Austrian Lloyd Company had established a new line, direct from the Piræus to Cyprus, in connection with their weekly Constantinople boats. Whereupon, being in the country, we at once telegraphed instructions for the forwarding of our tents and camp-gear to Trieste by *grande vitesse*.

Giving them over a week's start, we followed on

the 7th of October by the Harwich, Rotterdam, and Munich route to Trieste, only reaching the latter an hour before the departure of our steamer, the *Achille*. As, however, my telegraphic instructions had been duly carried out, our baggage was already on board, and we got away without any trouble.

Smooth seas and sunny skies made up this time for the abominable weather I had experienced in these waters during the previous year, and we reached the Piræus at daylight on the 14th, spent the day in Athens, which was new to my wife, and sailed again at sunset on another steamer, the *Galatea*. After the first night we were in waters new to me, but all we saw were a few of the countless islets of the archipelago—all more or less barren-looking. During the second night we passed between the island of Rhodes and the Asiatic mainland, and on Sunday morning saw the Cilician coast low on the horizon. Next day we reached Limassol by daybreak, landed, and put up at a very indifferent hotel, whose only recommendation lay in the cleanness of its beds. Indeed this was considered a feature of the house, as may be seen by the proprietor's card—"A Grand and New Hotel Troodos of Nic. Kypriotis, with new and clean matresses (*sic*) and excellent cookery."

Limassol can have altered but little during the twenty-one years of the British occupation, and differs only from an ordinary Turkish town by the absence of smells. We had to spend forty-eight hours here perforce, my permit to land arms not having arrived. A good deal of this time was spent in laying in stores, in which operation we were not a little bothered by the currency. The gold and silver, of

course, is British, but for some extraordinary reason the shilling has been divided into nine copper piastres, of the value of a penny and a third each. Of course no more inconvenient number than nine could have been hit upon, as it is only divisible by three, being in this respect far worse than the decimal, whilst our own twelve is the best of all. We also engaged a camp cook — a Constantinople Greek named Theodore, who proved a very bad bargain, being both incompetent and insolent, and whom I eventually turned out of camp after enduring him for three weeks.

On the second day of our stay the necessary documents arrived; but instead of the four I had applied for, I only received a licence to shoot two moufflon. I had to pay a 25 per cent duty on my gun, rifle, and cartridges, which sounds alarming, but three-fourths of the money is returned on one's leaving the island.

We now made arrangements with a negro muleteer to provide us with transport to the mountains. Unfortunately no European saddles were at the moment available, and we had to use the native ones. To make these more comfortable, the muleteers coolly opened our bedding valise and packed a number of our blankets on them. What would have occurred under the circumstances if we had had a wet ride into camp it is difficult to say, but fortunately the weather was good to us.

We were up betimes on Thursday the 19th, but the usual delays of the East occurred; and at last, having paid an hotel bill by no means commensurate with the accommodation the place had afforded us, we walked on to the Police Lines, where our train of

seven mules overtook us not much before ten o'clock, and we mounted. Our road, a fair carriage one, with almost universally good gradients, led at first over an uninteresting and burnt-up plain, dotted with carob and a few olive-trees. This gradually gave way to rolling foot-hills. We passed the military hut encampment at Polimedia at some little distance, but no other human habitation was to be seen. At a little khan we dismounted for grapes and coffee. During the halt one of the mules kicked off his load, and we left the men reloading, not to see them again for some hours, and pushed on. The road was perhaps somewhat more animated than usual, for the summer exodus to Mount Troodos was at an end; we met officials, their baggage, and Greek sutlers at frequent intervals. Nevertheless we were pretty sick of our hot march before we reached Silikou—a khan pretentious enough to call itself a hotel—and lunched under some plane-trees by a purling stream. It was then half-past three, and we saw little chance of reaching Pano Platrœs, our intended sleeping-place, by dark, though we urged our pack-train to haste as they passed us here.

In less than an hour we were ourselves on the road again, but darkness was closing in ere we reached Peripedhi, only to find our pack-train unloaded. There was, however, no possible place to sleep, and to unpack tents seemed a nuisance. In some difficulty we took the liberty of consulting the English owner of a large wine factory here, and he most hospitably asked us to make use of his house. Tired as we were, we were only too glad to accept. Going up to the factory we found the camp of the British Army of Occupation—one company of the Sherwood Foresters

The tabernacle was ornamented with elaborate carvings, the work of an old archimandrite who was most anxious to show it to me, but the most conspicuous ornament thereon was the Imperial Russian Eagle! This is possibly not political in this case, the monastery having cause to be thankful to Russia for many benefits, and being a place of much resort to Russian pilgrims. Moreover, it owns property in Russia, near Batoum, I believe: Mrs Stevenson says in Roumania also, and credits it with an income of £10,000 a-year. It should be far more, were its properties honestly administered.

Will it seem ungrateful if I here admit that these monasteries, of which there are an enormous number, are the curse of Cyprus, and that their dissolution is earnestly called for? Their collective revenues, especially when we consider the dishonest manner in which the monastery lands are managed, would probably pay the annual tribute to the Porte (£92,000 odds), a grievous burden which prevents Cyprus from making any substantial progress.

The monks are an idle, illiterate body, and more than suspected of leading a dissolute life. Be this as it may, the monasteries are entirely useless, and only serve to pauperise certain dependent villages, thus contrasting strongly with the various Catholic orders, who have been of such assistance to the Bosnian Government, in instructing the people in agricultural and dairy matters, and even in certain manufactures, by example as well as precept, and in acting as parish clergy and teachers.

After seeing the church we mounted our mules and started again, taking a track leading westward for some three hours through the pine forest. On the

higher ridges cedars, reminiscent of the Himalayan deodars, were growing, but as a rule the forest was pitch-pine and holm-oak.[1] We clambered up and down, and along ridges which gave us the same beautiful double view as on the previous day, till at last we reached our intended camping-ground at Dodeka Anemi (The Twelve Winds). The place is well named, for the only level spot for a tent is exposed to "all the airts that blow." There was, however, no help for it, so we pitched our camp and settled in—only just in time, too, for it rained in the night, besides being very cold.

Plenty of bedding is required in a Cyprus mountain camp, and we very soon found we had to send for some more native quilts, or *poplimas*. As it was, I don't know what we should have done without the invaluable little oil-stove, which warmed the tent wonderfully.

This camp was not picturesque in itself, but the view over the pine-clad hills and glens was fine enough, and at sunset beautiful.

Of the presence of moufflon in the district we had evidence that first night, when we were awakened by the frantic scurrying of a herd whose tracks we found outside next day. Probably they had come to drink, this being the only water for miles round.

Of this animal I think it is now time to give some description. The wild sheep of Cyprus (*Ovis ophion*), though admitted by naturalists to be a good species, is really only a local variety of the Armenian wild sheep (*Ovis gmellini*). Local conditions, a limited range, and inbreeding have varied it to the extent

[1] There is a fine cedar-grove on the western side of the wild glen of Exo Mylos, of which more hereafter.

that it is a good deal smaller than this latter, and has some slight differences in colouring. It inhabits the entire forest-clad north-west of the island from Pomos Point on the west to Mount Adelphi in the centre of the island, at a height of from not much over 3000 to over 6000 feet; but it is most plentiful in the province of Papho, where a large tract has recently been set apart as a sanctuary for these animals. A charge of ten shillings is made for each animal, to shoot which a licence is granted; and as a matter of fact, not many are killed in this way. The total for the season 1899-1900 was three—but I anticipate.

I must now try and describe the "lie of the ground" on which I was about to shoot.

From the main backbone of the island a high ridge, called Khorteri, runs off at right angles, dividing the basin of the Ayias river from that of the stream, unnamed on the map, which runs north-westward and into the sea at Krysokou. As a matter of fact, I rarely shot out of the Ayias basin, the sanctuary being in the other.

The principal affluent of the Ayias is the Koupho-platanou, which rises in the Exo Mylos glen, and runs along the eastern side of the Khorteri ridge. The Ayias is separated from it by the Appiœs ridge, which runs up to our first camp at Dodeka Anemi, and at whose southern end the rivers converge. Both these streams have a score of feeders, dry, as a rule, except after heavy rain; and these have cut the ground into a network of valleys and nullahs. The whole of this ground is covered with pine forest, and consequently requires the most careful stalking, for a few steps forward bring a totally different extent of ground into view, the tree-tops covering all, or nearly all, that had

previously been visible. Moreover, an animal which may be quite invisible to oneself may have a very good view of one's legs. Fortunately the moufflon does not see very well, and like many wild animals depends mostly on his nose for protection, in which matter the constantly changing and baffling winds of his forests help him much.

The first day in camp is generally occupied in settling in, but on the second, having been engaged in shooting stone-hens (*Perdix Græca*) for the pot in the morning, I went out to look for moufflon after lunch, alone (as Jerome,[1] whom I had engaged at Kykkou as stalker and camp-servant, had gone to the monastery for some supplies), but spied a good deal of likely ground in vain. It appeared to me that there were too many sheep and goats about in this part of the forest for much chance of sport, but this was an erroneous idea, for I afterwards saw plenty of moufflon right amongst the herds.

After lunch a forest-guard, whom I afterwards got to know much better by the name of Mustapha, appeared, and told me that the best place for moufflon was farther south, and also that there were no hares (so useful in a camp kitchen) so high up. On his advice we decided to move lower down, for we were sick of this camp. Our tents were continually thrashed by every wind that blew, the nights were very cold, the water-supply but scanty, and the whole camp horribly dusty and dirty, so we gave Mustapha a letter to the *mukhtar* or head-man of the village of Pano Panagia, to which he was bound, to send us pack animals on the next day but one.

[1] Greek—Caralampi.

Next morning I was up betimes, and started off with Jerome, who seemed to have some ideas on the subject of stalking, in spite of the ponderous iron-clad knee-boots which he, in common with all the Cypriote peasantry, wore. Not half an hour out from camp, as we were going along the Appides ridge with the wind behind us, we "jumped" some moufflon on the lower side of the ridge. All I personally saw was a pair of hindquarters, but the peasant on our return to camp said that the herd had consisted of five—all ewes. After this we tried a lot of likely ground, descending twice to the valleys, where the luxuriant vegetation of plane, alder, bramble, and oleander formed a considerable contrast to the bare pine forest above, and up the opposite slope—no joke under so hot a sun—but saw neither horn or hoof again that day.

Next morning a pack-train of seven donkeys turned up; and, after driving a pretty hard bargain in the matter of payment, moved us in some two and a half hours to Ayia, a picturesque spot where the river of the same name makes a curve to the eastward, also receiving a confluent stream, then dry, from the other side. Tradition says that Ayia was once a village, and the site of the church was pointed out to us. Whether this is so or not, it is now a *mandria* or sheep-fold, where the people go with their flocks at certain seasons. The exact camping-place was on a green slope in the angle between river and brook, and was shaded by an enormous, and probably secular, pine. This camp promised in every way more satisfaction than the other, for it was less dusty, warmer, and less exposed to the wind. Also, the water-supply was ample—in fact I believe in normal seasons the

river never ceases to flow here. The experiences of our first night at Dodeka Anemi were repeated here. Again the night was showery; and at two in the morning I was awakened by the gallop of a frightened moufflon which had come unexpectedly on our camp.

Next morning Jerome and I made a later start, and, pursuing his usual tactics of stalking up to every gully, he brought me up in not much more than an hour to a small herd of moufflon not more than sixty or seventy yards away. It did not take me long, however, to convince myself that it consisted of three ewes only, at which I never fire — indeed it is illegal in Cyprus. Unloading my rifle, I contented myself with watching them for a short time. The Cyprian moufflon is said to be the smallest of all wild sheep, and the female, which has no horns, is not at all dissimilar to a roe, but the colour is warmer—a reddish grey (exactly the colour of the ground they live on) with a whitish disc on the back ribs, which latter peculiarity they share with the true moufflon.

After this we had a good deal of walking—weary work on these hillsides where the whole ground consists of slippery, loose shale and pine-needles. It was not till after our frugal lunch—in fact at two o'clock—that my eye caught something abnormal on a spur far below. Turning my Zeiss glass on to the object, I at once called my man's attention by a sharp hiss, and we both dropped like setters. It was a splendid moufflon ram; and at last I was face to face with the animal I had come so far to seek—literally face to face—for he was staring hard at our recumbent forms, whose stillness, however, lulled him

into security. For half an hour we lay and watched him. He was about six hundred yards away, and through the glass I could of course see him distinctly. As is the case with most sheep, he was considerably larger than the ewes I had seen that morning. His colour was a rich orange-red, darker as to the fore-quarters, but this ended abruptly in a line about the middle rib. Then came the white saddle-mark, and the rest of the hindquarters were appreciably lighter than the fore. Belly and legs were white—that is, the legs below the knee; and above the limbs were deeply lined with black, this giving him a very game-like appearance. The horns, rising V-shaped from the forehead and making a perfect triangle with the white muzzle, were, as I judged, about twenty inches long, and as thick as a man's wrist — quite good enough for a beginning, and I looked upon them with a covetous eye, fully realising, however, that they were a long way from being mine yet.

My own idea of the stalk would have been to ascend the valley, which separated us from the ram, some quarter of a mile, then cross and work down on him from above. The ground just above him looked very bad and rocky, however, and then there was the doubt whether so restless an animal as a wild sheep would wait whilst we went all that way round. Even during the half-hour we were watching him he got up twice, looked about in every direction, and then lay down facing a different way. At last we crawled off on our backs out of his field of vision, and Jerome began an almost direct approach behind a spur to leeward, which was covered with arbutus and holm-oak scrub. Presently I put my hand on a rock as big

as my head, when it gave way and went down with a crash. Fortunately at the moment we were well behind the corner, and the ram was not alarmed, as I had the opportunity of ascertaining with the glass. Wild animals which inhabit hilly ground are not, as a rule, much alarmed by the fall of rocks or stones, though if they are very near the place they move a little from prudential motives. The obvious reason is that stones are constantly rolling down on such ground from quite natural causes.

Now Jerome began to pantomime to me about the shot. The range seemed to me rather excessive, so I pointed to a tree some forty or fifty yards further on, and said "Δενδρον," this being about the extent of my Greek. We continued our advance, and soon reached the place I had meant without noise and well hidden behind the shrubs. Alas! that some envious eddy should have carried the dreaded taint of man a couple of hundred yards across the glen! But so it must have been, for the ram was gone. In vain we searched and peered about with and without the glass, but those thick horns and that orange-red pelt were safe—for that day at all events. Trying to console myself with the reflection that it must, anyhow, have been a long shot across a gully, I gave the word for home, and reached camp just in time to have a hot bath before afternoon tea.

Later on I often tried to find this ram, and the place where I had seen him, again, but as far as the latter was concerned, in vain. Finally, I was driven to the conclusion that Jerome had—in all innocence I dare say — taken me into the sanctuary on this occasion.

Next day our first Cypriote Turk [1] from the village of Asproyia put in an appearance, and begged me to go shooting with him, as he could show me plenty of moufflon. He had just been with an English officer for twenty days and shown him plenty of game, but, unfortunately, the visitor had not been able to hit them. In proof of this statement he produced a ·500-bore Express cartridge-case. He seemed to be a man of sense, as he brought with him plenty of bread, wine, and other necessaries loaded on a donkey, so I agreed, and next morning he started with Jerome and myself. Hussein, for such was his name, was hardly dressed for stalking, for he wore a red fez, with a blue turban round it, a blue-and-white striped shirt, and spotless white breeches, which last, however, he covered up with a dirty cloth when at work. Nor was he above discarding his head-dress and knee-boots at critical moments.

We went southwards, and in about an hour and a half moved some moufflon ewes, which I personally only heard. At noon, in a ravine under the hill which goes by the name of Kalokœrinos, the Turk spotted a single ewe, which I entirely failed to pick up with the glass, and, if it had not been for my having found the big ram two days before, I do not know what my men would have thought of me. Later on Hussein, who was very anxious to show me sport, sent Jerome on to post me whilst he tried what in Austria is called *riegeln*—in other words, that form of driving in which one or two beaters move game

[1] Really I believe the people of this village are what is known as "Linobambaki," neither Christian nor Mohammedan, but dressed like Turks. They are said to be, or descended from, compulsory converts to Islam. At all events these fellows drank all they could get.

quietly to the gun. This is rarely successful, however, unless one knows precisely where the game is, and in this case, although there were four moufflon, they went out over the opposite hill. Hussein was very disgusted at his failure, as, according to him, he had so recently shown so much sport. Possibly the very fact of so much recent shooting accounted for the difficulty I was experiencing in getting a shot at a ram. Telling him I would give him another trial later on, I sent him home.

Sunday I made a day of rest, but on the 30th of October I was off at eight o'clock, and worked right round the high hills, Kourkoumi by name, to the west of our camp. We climbed for seven hours in bad ground (a mass of rolling stones on steep hillsides) without seeing anything. At last, a little after three o'clock, as we were working a ridge to the north of the hill where the wind, directly behind us, gave us a good chance in the glen to our left, I heard a snorting whistle at the down-wind end, and, looking up, caught sight of the curved horns and the hindquarters of a moufflon ram disappearing over the ridge. Half a minute later a second alarm note sounded a little lower down, but this sheep I never even saw. Five minutes afterwards the scolding of the jays on the opposite hillside showed the line the fugitives had taken, though we could not see them. Not even a woodcock or a hazel-grouse is smarter at putting a tree between himself and the gun than these sheep; and of all those I moved this week I never saw one again after the first glimpse. They are also very noiseless in getting over the stones—quite different to a chamois. This end of the hill was in full view of my camp, at a distance of perhaps a thousand

yards. (On another occasion I watched my unconscious spouse eating her lunch outside the tent from thence—with the glass of course.) One at least of the rams had been lying in low cover, and therefore was perfectly safe, the hill being too high to be overlooked from any adjoining point. Considerably disgusted, I made off down the hill, passing on the way one of those trees here common, which at that season are covered with little apple-like fruit—or rather, I should perhaps say, with fruit like large haws, but of a yellow colour. Here the moufflon had been busy, for every fallen one had been eaten, and the ground stamped about in their search for the delicacy. A Turk who was going to Papho for supplies for us that day said the moufflon were like sheep after the fruit near the villages, but whether this was the kind of fruit he meant I do not know. This, at any rate, though nowhere plentiful, is scattered everywhere through these woods.

It might have been thought that I had had my share of bad luck by now, but on the following day fortune was still more cruel to me. Having noticed that Jerome was somewhat careless about keeping near me when he was carrying my rifle, I had him cautioned on this point by Theodore before I left camp, and we started, turning up the first lateral valley of any size below us on the right bank of the river. This valley, which is a very short one, has a glen running out of it to its left, and this glen is one of the last originating in the long ridge called Elœon Muti, which runs from the before-mentioned watershed almost to the Ayias river. We climbed the left side of the valley, and reached a point overlooking the ravine. Here, about half-past nine,

Jerome made a capital spy of the biggest moufflon I had yet seen. He was greatly excited about it, actually throwing an arm round my neck as we sat, and then crossing himself and muttering an audible prayer to the Panayia[1] to grant us the moufflon.

This ram was a noble fellow, almost black about the withers, and with a saddle-mark as pure white as his muzzle. His horns, or so it seemed to me, would nearly, or quite, have broken the record. This time I would have no chancing it. We retired into the valley, creeping off with great care, and descending to the water-course at the bottom. This we followed up-stream for half a mile, and then, turning left-handed, climbed the ridge behind him. The heat was now so great that I was glad to put my coat in the rucksack during this operation. When we reached the top I smoked a pipe, and then, leaving all our impedimenta (Jerome even discarded his hat and boots) we began the actual stalk. The ground was so steep and so covered with loose stones that I had to do most of it on my back. When we got down to the place where the ram had been, or rather to a point whence we could see it, he was gone. Knowing we could not possibly have put him away, I did not attach much importance to this, and laughed at the peasant when he pointed out some very old tracks as having been made by the moufflon in his flight. I continued to examine every nook and corner. Unfortunately, whilst I was diligently using my glass, Jerome went a few yards farther down, taking my rifle with him. The next moment he was scrambling up again, crying, "Γληγορα! Γληγορα!" (Quick! Quick!)

[1] The Virgin.

One glimpse I had of two splendid horns over the next little ridge, the head between them turned in wonder at my lunatic, and then, before I could grasp the rifle, the ram was gone, and life was a blank. Two hours' hard and scientific stalk wasted by an act of disobedience! Had he only left me the rifle I might at least have had a snap-shot; but had he remained still, we should certainly have picked up the moufflon instead of its being disturbed by his restlessness. That night he struck for higher wages. The occasion was unpropitious, and I allowed him to return to his *Penates*, and took out the next day a man called Janni, who was absolutely useless, and clattered through the woods like a mule. So I sent for Hussein again.

On the 3rd of November he took me to the same valley where Jerome had lost me the ram, and very cleverly found four moufflon—three ewes and a ram—a long way up the main valley. They were, however, moving on, and so I did not think much of the chance. I sent Hussein to try and head them back to me, but in this he failed, and we saw no more game that day.

I found myself obliged to dismiss Hussein, who was suffering from a disease which made him an impossible companion. A week followed which was so abominably windy that stalking was quite impossible; but on going out one morning with my gun in the hope of woodcock (I had seen the first on the 1st of November) or stone-hens, I came on a herd of moufflon—the same as I mentioned last—not eighty yards off, and not a furlong from camp. Even small-game shooting ceased to be a resource, for a forest-guard notified me that only the rifle was allowed to be used in this forest, and of course only at moufflon.

Meanwhile I had engaged another Turk, by name Mehemet. His great idea was that I should go out early—as I supposed in the hope of catching the animals returning from feeding. I agreed to his plan, but the first occasion was hardly a success, the men over-sleeping themselves, and I being the first to awake in camp—but too late.

Mehemet was a fat-faced Turk with an appalling squint. He also had been with the previously-mentioned Englishman on his unsuccessful expeditions, and was full of his doings. It was: "Here the Captain saw twelve." "These egg-shells were left by the Captain, who lunched here one day." "Here the Captain: 'Bang! Whizz! Tut-tut-tut! Bang! Whizz! Tut-tut-tut!'" Until, although the reproduction of my successor's misfortunes was rather comical, I felt inclined to say, like the young Irish lady in the story, "The blazes take the Cyaptin!" especially as a terrible fear that my bag might be like unto his was beginning to steal over me.

Tó make up for over-sleeping themselves they called me on the following day at a quarter to four, and an hour later I left camp, preceded by Mehemet carrying a torch of pine splinters, for it was pitch dark. It was a weird walk through the forest, our path following the course of, and often far overhanging the course of, the Ayias river. On occasions like these one cannot help thinking of the many similar groups, sportsman and native, to be found hunting unfamiliar animals all over the world every season, often, like ourselves, unable to speak to each other, and driven to the use of those signs familiar to those "knowledgeable" in such matters, no matter what their colour or country may be. Our progress was slow,

frequent halts being made to gather fresh pine splinters, or to carefully stamp out fallen sparks. This, I thought, is an English lesson, for in the Sultan's woodlands they are a good deal more casual as to the chance of a fire.

At six o'clock it was just possible to walk without a torch. We continued to descend the Ayias valley, passing along the side of the hill known as Stavros Kratimatou. On the other side of the valley lay the convent of Khrysorrogiatissa, on which I turned my glass at a distance of about a mile. It is a fine building, but built upon an absolutely bare hill, whereas the monks of Kykkou have been careful to preserve the pine-trees surrounding their domain.

Our early start was not productive of any special result, but at ten o'clock Mehemet found a ram pretty cleverly in a long valley beyond the hill, and on the very outskirts of the forest. It looked as if a stalk was feasible. On the right hand—our side—of the valley in which the moufflon lay, and down which the wind was blowing, several ravines ran up at right angles. We started on our way, and duly reached the nearest ridge but one to the ram, and then Mehemet could not find him. After at least twenty minutes' peering and spying, I dropped the glass on him lying down. I verily believe he had not moved, and this shows the difficulty of finding these wild sheep with the glass. Bright as their colouring is at this season, it harmonises perfectly with the autumnal tints of half the bushes on the hillside; and as for the white marks, half the hillside is covered with them — stones and dead pine branches shining in the sun.

This particular moufflon was a fairly good beast,

with horns perhaps twenty inches long and a white saddle-mark. Watching him till he looked away, we slipped over the ridge and down into the next glen. There we left all our gear, and attacked the face in front of us—a stiff climb. When we were up it I motioned Mehemet to peer over whilst I took breath, but he could see nothing, nor could I when I joined him, though I thought I heard a stone or two rattle on the opposite slope. After we had made a careful search the Turk rolled a rock or two into the valley, but nothing resulted. This seemed conclusive, so I sent Mehemet off to get his boots and my rucksack.

A consolatory pipe seemed to be the next best thing—consolatory, though the stalk must have been spoiled more by accident than otherwise, for some wood-cutters had commenced work right behind us during its duration — so I put the safety-bolt on and commenced to walk, or rather climb up the ridge, which would obviously be our way on. As I was doing so something made me turn my head — and there was the ram! He was descending from the top of the opposite hill, and crossing my front diagonally at a sling trot. I promptly sat down, and waited for him to stop. This he did. "Click!" I had forgotten the safety-bolt. Off went the ram again,—not that he could have heard me, for he was three hundred yards away, — so I had to take the running shot. It — possibly the absence of smoke — seemed to puzzle him, for he pulled up, but unfortunately just where a tree hid him from me. Presently he trotted out again, and I fired once more. That shot went very near, for he broke into a gallop, but, evidently failing to locate the danger,

soon fell back into a trot. One more crack I had at him as he plunged into the glen, and then he was gone.

Of course these were but "shots of despair," and I do not know that I should have fired at all but for the desire to change my luck, and to try the Jeffery ·400 rifle, with which I was much pleased, for with the tremendous charge there was no perceptible recoil, nor was the report very loud.

After this my Turk kept me at it till four o'clock, but we saw no more game.

It might be thought that I had now piled up all the bad luck conceivable in moufflon-shooting, but I was to have practical demonstration that this was not the case. The next twenty-four hours were wet; and it was not till the thirteenth—ominous date—that I was able to leave camp with Mehemet at six o'clock. He took me to the first lateral valley below camp on the left bank of the river, and in a very short time found two rams on the middle slopes of Kourkoumi—not beasts of the finest class, but quite good enough for me. Indeed by this time anything with horns would have stood a poor chance as far as I was concerned. We got a little nearer, but soon lost sight of the sheep, which were feeding and moving on. A long time was wasted in looking for them, but in vain; and finally we moved off up-wind.

Now came the crowning misfortune—a ram jumped at short distance; rifle thrust into my hands; ample time for aim at the form silhouetted darkly against the sky, and only about forty yards away; "click!" —that safety-bolt again—a derisive whistle, and then silence. As he had not winded, nor even clearly seen

us, I judged he would not go very far. The event proved I was right, for a circuitous advance soon brought us again within three-score yards of him. This time there was no mistake on my part, but unfortunately there was none on the side of the ram either. All I saw was a brief glimpse of his back as he dashed through the trees down below me. He was still going up-wind, but a search on the nearest ridge in front showed no tracks. The cunning beast had circled back, and ere long we saw him again, half a mile down-wind, but continually on the move, just at the spot where we had previously seen the other two. Mehemet wanted me to go after him, but a stalk with an already alarmed and moving animal seemed waste of labour, so I sent him round on the chance of a driven shot, as there were possibly three rams on that hill. All that came to me, however, was a little ewe. For a few seconds she halted about seventy yards off, then a movement on my part (as I naturally did not trouble about her) was detected, and with a shrill whistle she dashed off down the glen. After this we went home to lunch. This was one of the days in which we practically were in the middle of a herd of goats all the morning, but this made no difference whatever to the wild sheep.

Next day we again left camp about daybreak, going up the side valley to the west of the camp. We climbed its southern side, and had not gone far along the ridge when I made out moufflon moving on the opposite slope. I could only get the glass on them in time to see a ewe and her youngster following the others into a clump of trees. Mehemet proposed his usual tactics—direct advance; and as the wind, though not very favourable, was very light,

I agreed. Down the hill we went, and up the opposite face. It was very hot, and both of us were bathed in perspiration before we reached the ridge we were making for—one that ran out into the valley at right angles. Here the Turk took off his boots, and we continued our advance on hands and knees till we made out a single ewe lying down, and not much more than a hundred yards away. The wind seemed to blow direct from us to her, but she lay still, so the obvious deduction was that there was some slight curl of air just in front of us which made us safe. The one thing to do was to lie still—for hours if necessary—till her companions showed. I had the glass on her when, to my delight, the kid joined her and she rose. I thought I should see the others now, but all at once the two in sight put up their heads and dashed off. When they reappeared, far up the hillside, they were accompanied by four others, two being rams, and one of these a big one. I looked round, and soon ascertained the cause of their alarm. Mehemet, not having the patience to wait, had crawled on, with the result of giving them the wind. They bunched up for a moment, and then dashed downwards. I got into position, thinking I should get a shot after all; but it was not to be, for after a short descent they wheeled round and galloped over the sky-line, the big fellow leading as if he knew that his danger was the greatest. I hoped, against my better judgment, that they might not have gone far, and made a long circuit right up to the border of the sanctuary, never crossing their tracks, but failed to rediscover them all the same.

Thus was my second orthodox stalk—the game

found at a distance and worked up to *secundum artem*—in Cyprus spoiled by the impatience of a native. It was also my last stalk, as it turned out, and made a total of four. In each of the other two, as already related, the ram had moved before the approach was completed. Every other shot I obtained—not many as will be seen—resulted from coming on the game as unexpectedly on my part as on theirs, with the exception of one driven, and running, shot. The fact is that the country does not lend itself to stalking, and the best chances result from poking about quietly, being careful to work up-wind, and to approach every ravine and gully with caution.

We then went on to a hut on the Phyti-Stavro Road, which here forms the march of the sanctuary, and then right along the long ridge of Elœon Muti, which runs from this point almost to the Ayias. As we were working along, not too quietly, I caught sight of a ram crossing a gully to a spur in front of us. Seizing the rifle, I signed to my companion to sit down. The moufflon stopped twice to stare, and each time I put up the rifle, but each time a tree covered him more or less, and at the somewhat long range I hesitated to fire. At last he bounded off. I thought he would not go far, and we followed pretty smartly. It was over half an hour, however, before Mehemet saw him descending towards the ravine where I had stalked the big ram. We hurried on behind the ridge on our side of it, and reached the point where I had commenced my actual approach on that occasion. From this spot we saw him again. I thought he might come there, as there is a dip in the ridge forming a sort of pass; but the Turk

begged me to go lower down, and so at last I went on to the upper edge of the final slope. A little time elapsed, but nothing appeared, so I signalled to my man to go back and try to move him towards me.

Five minutes later I heard a stone roll, and directly afterwards the ram galloped past. I do not, I confess, fancy myself at galloping shots with a rifle, but when I fired he went down as though hit rather far back. He was up at once, though, and went back the way he had come. I hurried after him to get a second shot, but hearing a scrambling in the pass, made upwards, to find it was only Mehemet coming down. This spoilt my chance. We found no blood, but the ram had gone downwards—generally a sign of a wounded animal. Mehemet followed the spoor a bit, but soon gave up, saying it was no good; and no doubt I had missed. My only comfort was that it was not much of a ram.

At my shot five more moufflon moved out of the ravine up the opposite face, making a total of a dozen we had seen that morning.

My permit to shoot moufflon had now expired—these being for one month only—and so I applied for and obtained another. I had now been out six whole days and ten mornings without having had a really good chance—unless it was on the occasion when my rifle was bolted—and I felt that something must be done. Whilst I was wondering what this could be I happened to hear that Anastasi, mentioned in *The Field* fifteen years before as a capable stalker, was still flourishing. I had never thought of him, as he was described then as an old man. Mehemet declared that his eyesight was gone, but nevertheless I determined to try him, and sent off a letter to the

mukhtar of his village, Kinousa, to send him if he were able and willing to come. The old fellow was both, and tramped into my camp at the close of a soaking wet day quite cheery in spite of his being but lightly clad and so drenched that the red of his fez had run down his shirt. To me he seemed anything but decrepit, and his face had the hawk-like expression I always like to see in my hunters. He owned to sixty-seven—a mere trifle in comparison with my octogenarian Turkish hunter in Herzegovina, Fezo Zaklan. Anastasi surprised me considerably by telling me that he too had been with "the Captain" for no less than twenty days.

Next morning he shouldered my rifle, and led the way at a good pace along the edge of a sanctuary, and then up a ridge—the south end of Khorteri—overlooking a glen, and motioned me to sit down. Hardly had I done so when I heard a pair of jays screaming on the opposite slope, and shortly afterwards a sound which I did not consider referable to those birds. Five minutes elapsed, and then, hearing a stone roll to my left, I glanced that way and saw a young moufflon ram coming towards us. I reached for the rifle, but the old man was a little too far from me, and by the time I had got it the ram had stopped. I was in anything but a comfortable position, and the ram was standing "bows on," and so covered by a pine trunk to his left and a bush in front of him that I could only see a little of the right side of his chest and his head. I think I dwelt too long on my aim—a sure cause of unsteadiness; but anyhow, the shot missed, and the beast went off, but not far, for Anastasi signed to me that he could see him. I could not, and before I could crawl up to my hunter the

moufflon dashed off. We saw no more game that morning.

This was the only standing shot I had yet fired, and fearing my performance might prejudice me in the old man's eyes, on my return to camp I put up the end of an oil-tin at about 120 yards' range, and shot five consecutive bullets into it. This quite reassured him, and was, I may add, a creditable performance for a rifle of this class fired without a rest.

Anastasi told me, through our cook and interpreter —a capital fellow by the way, though answering to the curious name, for a Cypriote villager, of Mentschikoff—that I had been in too great a hurry, and that if I had come up nearer to him I should have seen more of the ram, and had a better chance. My own opinion was, and is, that had I not fired when I did I should probably not have had a shot at all, as a few yards farther would have carried the beast out of sight and over the hill-top.

Next day the old man said I had wounded this ram in the shoulder, but this was a bit of blarney meant to soothe my feelings.

A very wet night followed, and my men seemed reluctant to turn out on the following squally, misty morning. We did, however, go out for some three or four hours, but I saw no moufflon, though whilst I was away from them for a minute or two on the eastern edge of the big ravine, they claimed to have seen two rams—one as big as a donkey; and no doubt they did, for they were very excited. Anastasi sent Mehemet round to head them back, but nothing came of the manœuvre. This was probably the big ram I had seen thereabouts before, and if so, as he

had taken to himself a companion, very possibly an animal the reader will hear of again.

How to write of the 27th and 28th of November! On the former day Anastasi led me up to a herd feeding in a gully on the northern side of Kourkoumi. I fired, resting my elbow on my knee, at a young ram standing on a rock. I fancied I heard the bullet tell, especially as I afterwards saw him standing in the bottom with his head hanging. Then he followed the herd down the ravine.

Anastasi hurried me off in the vain hope of another shot at one of the others, and then returned, saying—

"We have one, anyway!"

Alas! careful search failed to discover blood, and I could not induce the old man to follow far.

The glen was a mass of low scrub and gorse, and I still believe the poor beast lies dead somewhere amongst it, but I never saw him again. If it was a miss, I have some excuse for it, as for three days and three sleepless nights I had been suffering from acute neuralgia.

Next day was warm. With my head wrapped up in flannel, I sallied out again, and in the valley of the Kouphoplatanou, not far below Exo Mylos, the wildest spot I had yet seen in this wild country, the old man brought me up again to a ram with two attendant ewes, picking up acorns in a little gully.

At some fifty yards' range I scored—a clean miss! Sometimes I think the very perfection of my rifle was to blame, and that being so near to, and a good deal above, the moufflon, I aimed too much below him, making the allowance which would have been desirable with the old black-powder Express, and actually undershot him—a thing, as all sportsmen

know, that so rarely happens. I could not even have a running shot at him, for the ewes galloped on each side of him as he passed.

Four more moufflon we saw that day, but such chances come not again.

It must not be supposed that old Anastasi showed me game every day. On the contrary, we had six blank days about this time; and at last he told me it was no use going on, as the mushroom-gatherers had driven all the game into the sanctuary. (This mushroom, which is of an orange colour, is not bad eating. It grows everywhere under the pine-needles at this season, and whole villages—men, women, and children, mules, donkeys, and dogs—come into the forest for it, generally bivouacking till the beasts are laden.)

This drawback had for some time been an obvious one to me, and at last I decided, though my permit was only about half-time expired, to give it up till a better season.

The Commissioner (or Governor) of the Papho Province had most hospitably invited us to his house at the capital, Ktima; and after staying a fortnight with him we took a little native house, buried in gardens, and filled up the time with small-game shooting.

It really seemed as if my luck with the moufflon in 1900 was to be on all-fours with my fortune in the previous year, for, when I had obtained a permit for the last month of the season, the 15th of January, the day which ought to have seen me beginning shooting, found me on a sick-bed, suffering from blood-poisoning, resulting from centipede-bite,

with my head swollen to the size, and very much the shape, of a Rugby football, and my "rifle eye" as completely closed as if a Sayers or a Heenan had planted a left-hander in it. However, a clever little Armenian doctor put me right with heroic doses of calomel and quinine so far as to get me out of bed a week after I had intended to have started, and about again in another week.

As the season was so fast slipping away, I decided, in spite of a large unhealed wound on my forehead, to start on the 1st of February, and I did so, riding an easy-paced mule up to the police-barrack at Phyti in five hours. This is one of the most prettily situated of these buildings, and the balcony of the strangers' rooms overlooks the Bay of Khrysokou and the white-capped range of Taurus across the intervening sea, but this latter is only clearly visible in early morning. The Cyprus mountains are not to be seen from this point, but I had noticed the day before that, although Troodos was white with snow, there was none on the range for which I was making.

The next day was as fine as that before, but there was the usual long and unnecessary delay whilst the mules were being got ready. When they did come I rode off without waiting for my men. Before I reached the line of white pillars which marks the boundary of the forest I had come across an old grey fox, two woodcocks, and various coveys of stone-hens, all close to the road; but human beings I met none during my four hours' ride to the lonely forest hut at Stavro.

The forest seemed perfectly quiet; there was no sound of the woodcutters' axes; and altogether

things looked much more promising for sport than they had done when I left it two months previously.

An hour after I reached Stavro my pack-mules turned up, and my servant and I settled into the long mud-floored forest hut. This has a sort of dais at the fireplace end, and when my camp-bed was put up at one side of this, my arm-chair with a chair and table belonging to the place at the other, it seemed comfortable enough.

Just as night was closing in old Anastasi arrived, as brisk as ever; and his hearty snores kept me awake half the night.

Next day was again fine, though much too windy for stalking. Nevertheless I went out, and climbing out of the sanctuary (for the hut lies in the middle of it) over the shoulder of Khorteri we made our way into the Exo Mylos valley.

Now I began to find out what a long way it is from a sick-bed to stalking. I got along, it is true; but I was absolutely incapable of the exertion necessary for stepping over every stick or loose stone, and blundered along in anything but approved style. It did not matter, however, as we did not even see fresh tracks. I was sadly tottery at the knees the last mile or two coming home, although we were only out some four hours.

The pure air of the mountains had the effect of a tonic on me, and next day I already felt better. We went to new ground for me, to the north-west of the sanctuary, but again saw nothing—nor should we have done much good if we had, on such a blusterous gusty day.

The 5th of February was much warmer; we made our way to the upper slopes of the Kouphoplatanou

Valley. About noon we "jumped" two moufflon, both rams I think, but only saw one. Anastasi put the mishap down to the wind, which certainly was most annoying, but I thought he had not exercised his usual care in approaching the gully in which they were feeding. The wind was, however, undoubtedly the cause of our only getting a hurried glimpse of another ram in full flight, an hour later.

Although there was plenty of fresh sign we saw no more game, and having eaten our lunch in a side valley, which I was destined to know better next day, we climbed up to the Phyti-Stavro road, and returned home, having been out eight hours.

Three days out of the twelve at my disposal before the season ended were now gone, and no shot fired. Still, somehow, I did not feel despondent.

The sixth was a better day—cloudy, with bright intervals, and not too much wind. We left the hut at half-past eight, and, going more to the south than we had been this time, struck a ridge running in the direction of my old camp—in fact we went within a quarter of a mile of Ayias. A mule-track leads from that place to the Stavro road, and where that track leaves the Kouphoplatanou Valley we stopped for lunch about noon. Then we followed the track upwards, and in about a quarter of an hour Anastasi saw game—two rams in a small valley. Unfortunately the wind was bad, and scarcely had I caught sight of them than they were off.

The old man led me by a rough left-handed climb to a knoll high above the valley, which turned out to be the one in which we had lunched the previous day. We lay down and looked everywhere, but of moufflon nothing was to be seen. The other inhabitants of the

valley were, however, obviously disturbed. Here and there jays were scolding; and twice a fox barked farther up the glen. The blue rock-pigeons, too, with which these forests swarm, were restless, continually rising with loud wing-flappings to settle again farther on.

For about a quarter of an hour we lay, examining the hillside with the glass. From time to time I heard stones rolling on the opposite face, and told Anastasi, who is somewhat deaf. We failed, however, to discover the animal who was setting them in motion. At last one seemed to rattle on our side —in fact right below us. I peered over the knoll, and there—not much over forty yards away—were the rams.

I was in no position to shoot, so bobbed down again, and then with beating heart stole to the edge farther along. Nothing to be seen! As I feared, I had been detected; if I saw the moufflon again it would probably be to my right, their heads having been turned in that direction.

I turned round and sat down, drawing my knees up for a rest. I was right; about a hundred yards away they appeared, galloping. No chance was afforded then, but the steepness of the hill soon checked them. A little under two hundred and fifty yards away the smaller ram halted and looked back, but he was partly covered by the trees. His fellow, somewhat to his right, stopped too, directly afterwards, and in the open. Thinking of the range and the height he was above me, I aimed high on the shoulder and pressed the trigger.

I must confess to a most unorthodox "Whoo-whoop!" as I saw him collapse backwards to the

shot; and for that the many weary days I had passed in the quest must be my excuse.

Old Anastasi was as excited as a schoolboy, and hardly would give me time to reload before he dashed off. I kept up with him somehow—at least he was not more than a score of yards in front of me on reaching the spot where the ram lay in a couloir. He was soon put out of his misery, and then I had time to examine my specimen.

He was an old fellow—eight years old by the rings on his horns, which, though broken and worn at the points, were over three of my spans—that is, two feet long. There was no trace of the brilliant colouring I had noted in autumn on some of the rams. His shoulders and foreparts were heavily marked with black, which almost formed a cross just in front of the saddle-mark, which was a creamy grey. The back of the neck and the croup were an orange-brown. The very Roman-nosed face was grey-white, with the hair on it a good deal rubbed, as it was also on each side of the withers, by the points of his horns. He was about the size of an Epping Forest fallow-buck—five feet long from nose to tail.

The bullet had struck exactly where I had aimed, high up on the shoulder, and carried a splinter of bone out with it on the other side, making two holes at the exit. This proved that there was no necessity for making any allowance. It was fortunate that the ram had been looking back, for the bullet went out exactly where the mark showed the tip of the left horn generally rested.

Anastasi made a curious remark afterwards to the effect that the ram would not have lived long anyhow, and explained that these old rams die from their

horns meeting in the neck. He could hardly have meant actual physical injury, but it is quite conceivable that they become a great hindrance. In another year this pair would have met over the backbone.

We gralloched the moufflon where he lay, and then a stiff pull got him up out of the couloir. Anastasi then, with my help, manfully shouldered him, and carried him up to the main road, not a great way beyond. Here I left the old man on guard, and an hour's walk took me home, whence I sent back my man, Leonide, to assist in the carrying, and they finally got the beast in at a quarter to five.

That night all hands fed on moufflon liver, but I personally found it rather strong. This, however, was only due to its exceeding freshness, as the meat when well hung proved excellent.

The next morning was devoted to skinning and pegging out. Besides, it was an unpleasant, misty, drizzling morning, and I think no one was anxious to turn out. At half-past ten, however, we did start, and kept at it for five hours in weather which would have been seasonable on a Highland forest, but saw nothing, though a sufficiency of tracks kept hope alive in our breasts.

That night I had company in the hut in the shape of the local forest officer and his satellities. He had come up to inspect the new forest hut, which, in its unfinished state, the winter rains had reduced to little more than a heap of ruins.

Unlike many minor officials here, he spoke some English, which is by no means obligatory with them. I gave him dinner, and he gave me—the time; and I was astonished to find I was an hour and a half slow. No wonder I thought the days very short!

Next morning was as bad a day as its predecessor, and at nine o'clock my old stalker pleaded for an hour's delay, saying that the mist would be gone. To which I replied that it would take us that time to get up the hill out of the sanctuary anyhow; and so we climbed over the shoulder of Khorteri. For some time we toiled in vain, but there was no want of fresh tracks, which kept us going through the frequent showers along the upper slopes of the Kouphoplatanou Valley.

At last, a little before noon, we made out a ram at the bottom of a deep gully. There was no time to use the glass, for almost before we had squatted he was on his feet. He did not look to be large, but the light was bad; and anyhow, with less than a week of the season left, I could not afford to pick and choose, so I drew a bead and pressed the trigger.

The "crack" of the sixty grains' charge re-echoed in a tremendous "boom" from the mist-covered mountains opposite, and the ram was down. As often happens in these cases, his two companions, both rams, which I had not before noticed, stood gazing, amazed, until Anastasi dashed down on the quarry. Had I had licence to kill another I could easily have had a second chance.

Reloading, I listened with little discouragement to my stalker's cry of dismay at finding the ram had gone on, and rightly, for when I, going round by easier slopes, had got a better view of the spot, I saw him standing over the moufflon, which had only rolled and struggled a score of yards, and was dead, indeed, before I got down to him. It was a smaller specimen than my other, yellower, and with a more marked white saddle-mark. The ·400 Jeffery bullet had

wrought tremendous havoc with its more tender frame, for, striking rather high on the shoulder, it had actually knocked the other shoulder-blade right through the skin.

We had scarcely finished the gralloch when the rain came down more heavily than ever, and I, for one, was wet through before the shower was over. The old fellow gamely shouldered this smaller beast (it was some four or five inches shorter than the other) and toiled up the long hill, but it was cold work for me to keep with him, and at last I hurried on to send my man back to assist.

By the time I had had a hot bath and my luncheon they arrived, and we were able to skin and peg out before dark.

Next morning I sent Anastasi off to Ktima for my mule-train, having two days on my hands before they could arrive, which I devoted mostly to the preparation of my specimens.

That afternoon, however, I made my way to the ruined monastery of Stavro (St Stephen), which stands on an adjoining knoll. Nothing remains of it except a mass of stones (some wrought) and tiles.

I did not ask its history, well knowing that its destruction would have been attributed to the Turk, and knowing also that the four letters T-U-R-K very often in the East spell neglect, poverty, and bad management on the part of Christian owners.

I could not, however, help admiring the beauty of the site — a thing, as has so often been remarked, almost invariable with such buildings—with its lovely view over the pine-clad valley.

It seems regrettable that this situation was not

selected for the new hut, but perhaps the water question would have involved heavier expense. Moreover, I believe that in the Greek Church "once consecrated, always holy" is the rule; and indeed, at the east end of what had obviously been the chapel, there were several large stones in such a position as to still suggest the idea of an altar.

The next day was passed in a somewhat similar manner.

On Sunday my mules arrived, and I rode back to Phyti, and, continuing my journey in pouring rain, on the following morning reached my temporary home in time for luncheon.

One of the very first things to be done there was to measure my head, as I had not had a tape in camp. I was greatly delighted to find it as long as the best specimen hitherto recorded (that shot by Mr Williamson), and rather better in the other measurements, so that I am fairly entitled to call it a record head.

The following are the measurements :—

Length of horns.	Girth of horn.	Greatest span.	Tip to tip.
25 inches.	8½ inches.	18½ inches.	7 inches.

I think it is more than probable that this ram was the best I saw in Cyprus, and I am inclined to believe that it was identical with that of which Jerome spoiled the stalk. At any rate, that was also a very large ram with similar horns, and on the last occasion on which he was previously seen he had a single smaller companion, as had the one I shot.

I believe there are two types of Cyprus moufflon horns, for in Mr Williamson's equally long but thinner

head the horns are spread widely apart at the tips, not approaching each other as mine do.

If the reader happens to have read my book, *In the Land of the Bora*, he may possibly recollect that during our Dalmatian trip I was spoken of by the local papers as "an English General" (at] thirty-five years of age). It was left for the Cyprus "φονη" to "go one better," and call me a millionaire, which to those who know me will seem very humorous indeed. As few of my readers will know more modern Greek than myself, I give the translation of the two paragraphs, which was made for me at the time.

"Moufflon Shooting.

"At last 'Snaffle,' who came to Cyprus some time ago for the purpose of shooting, can return gratified. After many and repeated excursions to the dense and wild forests of Papho, he some days ago succeeded in shooting a moufflon—a great event for him, and one which will not improbably attract other millionaire lovers of sport.

"Like a true sportsman, he has not complained in any way of the expense involved by his four months' stay for the purpose of shooting a moufflon; and now his hope has been realised.

"We remember that, when His Excellency presided for the first time at the meeting of the Legislative Council two years ago, he assured the members that many rich Englishmen were ready to visit Cyprus for the purpose of shooting, provided that they were sure that there was game in the island.

"He also added, that a whole district in Scotland, the name of which has slipped our memory, has become very rich owing to the excursions of wealthy strangers going there to shoot.

"Now, after two years' residence in Cyprus, His Excellency should be satisfied as to the existence of a sufficiency of game, so it rests with him to take the necessary steps."

"Another Success of 'Snaffle.'
The Total Number of Moufflon.

"The first success of 'Snaffle,' who some days ago shot a moufflon in the forest of Papho, has been followed by a second, as our local correspondent informs us. On this occasion, however, the sportsman has bagged a very fine and beautiful ram, and is therefore very pleased at his success.

"Now, our millionaire visitor is about to leave Papho, as the Government has only given him permission to shoot two moufflon.

"The forest-guards of that district assure us that there are within the forests of Papho more than five hundred moufflon."

"Our local correspondent" was, as the reader will observe, not quite accurate on other points besides that of my income. The big ram was the first shot. Moreover, the Government did not refuse me a further permit, for the good and sufficient reason that, knowing the season to be at an end, I did not apply for one.

As to there being five hundred moufflon in the Papho district, I am very sure that there are not half

that number in the whole island. Still the Government can very well afford to allow at least half a dozen rams to be shot every year — say, three in Papho district, two in Nicosia, and one in Limassol.

What is most wanted to preserve the moufflon is the wholesale laying of strychnine in the forests in winter, to reduce the enormous quantity of foxes, which no doubt kill the bulk of the lambs. The starving village curs also probably do much damage.

Having bagged my moufflon, and the shooting season being at an end, there was no object in my remaining in Cyprus. I did, however, linger another month at Papho trying to arrange an ibex-shoot on my homeward way, but these ideas were brought to a sudden end by my receiving telegraphic orders to join one of the new Royal Reserve regiments. Of course, the weather that week was too rough for any steamer to call at Papho, and we were obliged to trespass on the kindness of our hospitable Commissioner till the next, when we found ourselves once more under the familiar house-flag of the Austrian Lloyd Company.

This steamer took us to Alexandria, where a six days' detention enabled us to have a run up to Cairo; and then one of the beautiful boats of their Egyptian service took us to Brindisi in under sixty hours.

It was snowing in Italy—rather a violent change from the heat of Ghizeh a few days previously, and one which knocked us both out of time.

By taking our journey across Europe in a good deal more leisurely manner than that in which we had come,

we managed, however, to reach London by the Hook of Holland route in exactly a week more.

Note.—Some years ago I received a letter from a friend in Cyprus saying, "No moufflon has been shot here since yours." It might therefore not be impertinent to ask whence the 27-inch head, which was produced shortly after my expedition, and is now claimed by the proprietor of a museum in this country as "the record Cyprus sheep," came? He is on the horns of a dilemma, as either it is a poached specimen, or it is merely a rather small Armenian sheep.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

A STRANGE EXPERIENCE.

THE late autumn of the year 18— found us in the Grand Duchy of Luxemburg. Driven by that spirit of unrest which seizes in more mature years those whom occupation—or, indeed, fancy—has obliged to "move on" every few months in their younger days, we had reached the little town of F——, and, thankful to the chance that enabled us to enjoy its lovely surroundings, we had made a considerable halt at its little quiet hotel.

Whether the guiding motive was the utter absence of any other suggestion for hybernation, or the chance of wild-boar shooting held out to me (see chapter xxxi.), or some other now-forgotten reason impelled us, I do not remember; but certain it is we decided to look for winter quarters in the neighbourhood. After some fruitless inquiries we found them.

The noble family who once occupied the old castle, whose grey ruins still frown down on the town of F——, has practically disappeared. Their eyrie has been a ruin for a couple of hundred years, but early in the eighteenth century they had built a *château* just at the gate of the old town. This *château* was at the time of our visit in possession

of the widow of a descendant (through severa heiresses) of the old feudal lords: here it was we found a rest for the soles of our feet.

Madame de —— lived almost alone in the old place with her daughter, a woman of nearly forty. They kept but one servant, though there were cows and pigs to look after, besides the housework. It would be unnecessary for me to give a full account of the whole *château;* but in order that the reader may thoroughly picture to himself the scene of the extraordinary and inexplicable occurrences I am about to relate, it is necessary that I should describe at some length the locale in which the ghost appeared—or rather did not; but I must not anticipate.

The apartment, then, which we rented from Madame de —— was situate at the southern end of the old building, and, on the ground floor, was entirely detached therefrom. It was entered from the courtyard by a door exactly opposite that of the main *château.* Entering this you had one door in front of you and one on each hand. The former opened on the winding stone stairs, the right-hand one into the kitchen, and the other into the dining-room. Through the dining-room you reached a little drawing-room which, however, contained no stove, and was therefore useless in winter. Ascending the stairs one reached a building similar in plan, with this difference — that the space above the dining-room was divided. Two-thirds formed the bedroom, and from this opened a sort of lobby with several store closets, and a door (always locked, of course) communicating with the main building. Outside this was the landing, with steps leading into one of the huge lofts common on the Continent,

and used for drying linen and storing wood. Over the kitchen was my dressing-room.

The courtyard of the *château* was surrounded by a stone wall some ten feet high. Every night our servant, having completed her work, would go to Madame de ——'s, and their servant would open for her a postern in this wall, which was then locked till the following morning. Our quarters were so limited in extent that we found it more convenient for her to sleep at her sister's in the town. It is only necessary for me to add that the rooms in Madame de ——'s part of the house next ours were unoccupied, and that my two dachshunds slept in the dining-room.

So much, then, for the place. Late in December we took possession.

For two or three weeks, more or less, nothing of note occurred. I was away most days shooting, or if not, my wife joined me in long rambles about the leafless Ardennes forests.

At night nothing disturbed our repose. I may remark, however, that towards eleven o'clock I almost invariably heard a noise which I can best compare to an iron bar thrust against the wall below, and for which I in vain cudgelled my brains to account. What was worse, my wife noticed it too, and asked me what it was. The explanation I gave was certainly creditable to my imagination. I said that the board which closed the disused fireplace got warped with the heat of the stove, and that the noise we heard was made by its regaining its normal position as the stove cooled. Anyhow, it satisfied the feminine mind, and we slept in peace.

Two or three weeks had elapsed, and the carnival

was upon us—its first symptoms being, as usual, untuneful drinking-songs bawled out at "closing time" on Sunday evenings.

One night we had gone to bed as usual. Equally as usual our bedroom window was open at the top, and the door closed but not locked. We were just dropping off to sleep, when—at our—door—I heard a noise!

I have endeavoured since to describe that sound, but always felt myself brought up, as the sailors say, by the difficulty of finding the words to do so. In tone it was merely a sort of bellow—something between that of a calf and that of a rutting stag. But it was the expression that gave the sound its unearthly character. There was something about it so uncanny, and, moreover, when it was louder, so menacing, that it is impossible to compare it to any sound of everyday life. I am now speaking of it by the experience of frequent repetition; and I think I need hardly produce stronger evidence of the effect it had upon me—a middle-aged, prosaic man, ignorant of the meaning of the word "nerves,"—than that I have never since heard a similar sound without a throb of the heart, followed by the glad feeling, "That is not the sound."[1]

To return, however, to this first feeling.

"What was that?" exclaimed my wife, starting up.

"I don't know," I replied; and just then the sound was repeated, and I hastily struck a light.

[1] I have since found it exactly described in print: "The sound was so fierce, so cruel, so ugly, so like a bull's roar, and withal so like a human voice, and yet like neither of them."—Nathaniel Hawthorne, in *Tanglewood Tales.*

Once, twice more, was the sound repeated; and I now desire to place on record my asseveration that at no time on that evening did I connect the sound with anything supernatural. A candle was, as I have said, burning, and it was therefore obvious that there was nothing in the room. We exchanged a few hasty conjectures.

"Oh," I said, "I feel sure it's a Carnival joke. The T——s," mentioning a family whose acquaintance we had made, "have carried a calf in through the *château*."

Nevertheless, this explanation did not satisfy me. However, after a consultation, we decided to advance upon the foe. My wife was to open the door (which opened inwards, and would consequently cover her as it fell back), while I confronted the opening with a revolver in one hand and a candle in the other.

No sooner said than done. Nothing! Nothing in the lobby, nothing on the landing, nothing on the stairs, and only the dogs sleeping peacefully in the dining-room. I even opened the lobby window and peered out on to the frozen road. Not a sound broke the silence, the night was bitter cold, and a myriad of stars twinkled in the sky.

Utterly puzzled and considerably chilled, we returned to bed, locking the door this time. We had not been there one minute before the sound began again, but so convinced was I that we were the victims of a hoax that we managed to disregard them and to get to sleep; and also for this reason we were careful to say nothing about the matter the next day, lest by so doing we should give satisfaction to the authors of a practical joke.

Next night, after a careful examination of the premises, we locked both the door of the lobby and that of the bedroom. Nevertheless, as before, the noise began about eleven and lasted, with intervals, an hour. Finally, at about 8 A.M., I heard it once more—this time in broad daylight. This, of course, disposed of my supposition that it was a practical joke, worked from the road outside.

I now fell back on purely physical causes. After breakfast I proceeded to try the effect of different draughts on the door, and then examined and swung every shutter and door, not only in the house, but in the loft and in the other lofts adjoining. None of them produced any noise to speak of, and I may also add that I did not believe that the noise I had heard could have resulted from such a cause.

In the afternoon I called on the *châtelaine* and told her about the matter. She denied ever having heard of anything of the sort before. I may remark, though, that on one occasion of their dining with us some time later, Mademoiselle de —— admitted to my wife that some time before, having had their house quite full, they had allotted the bedroom to a cousin, who had been quite unable to sleep on account of strange noises she heard there.

Next night we left our sitting-room with some misgivings.

I kept the candle burning, and immediately the noise began went out again, revolver in hand, and found, as usual, nothing. Scarcely was I under the blankets again when it recommenced, and now assumed a tone (if I may be allowed the expression) so loud and threatening as really to terrify any one.

The room was lighted, and I held a loaded pistol in my hand; but in spite of it I felt such a feeling of horror that I broke out into a cold perspiration. Turning to my wife, I saw on her face that deathly and drawn look a woman's face assumes when her senses are leaving her.

"For God's sake, pull yourself together," I cried. "There must be some simple reason for all this."

I don't think that my remarks would have done much good if, fortunately, the sounds had not ceased. My wife, who, I may record, has never fainted in her life, has always said that, if they had not, she was sure she would have collapsed then.

Not to make my story too long, I may say that the same thing occurred nightly for about ten days. The phenomena presented no variety except that sometimes the sound would begin faintly, as if at some distance —in the dressing-room, it seemed—and then gradually approach and become louder till it terminated with the usual unearthly bellow just outside the door. We got more or less used to it, and having arranged a spare mattress inside the door so as partly to deaden the sound—even managed to sleep it out.

As I have said, it continued ten nights or so—and then stopped. For a week we heard nothing, and just as we were beginning to congratulate ourselves we had done with it, it began again, and occurred on and off till some time into March. We left Luxemburg at the end of that month, and at that time had heard nothing for a fortnight.

The sound I have mentioned was not the only entirely unaccountable thing that occurred in the

château. One night, however, I was aroused by a most furious barking. I hastened downstairs and found the two dogs confronting the open dining-room door with every symptom of fury.

This door was always closed when we came to bed. The kitchen was my first thought—door locked and room empty. The front door was also locked. I opened it, and the dogs ran out into the frosty moonlight, but not with the manner of dogs following up an object. Nothing was to be seen; gates and postern were locked. Taken by itself, I should have thought nothing of the incident, but under the circumstances I am loth to think that the cause of the alarm was a drunken man knocking on the window, or something of the sort. Besides, who opened the door? From a window on the stairs I could note the exact attitude of the dogs before they saw me. I may add that they were entirely insensible to the bellowing noise, for I tried the experiment of having them in my bedroom two nights for the purpose. When the sound began one only even raised his head. I jumped out of bed and excited them so that they dashed out when I opened the door. They sniffed about the lobby, and then looked up as much as to say, "No cats here; why are we disturbed?" When the sound recommenced they never even looked up.

In all the time that has elapsed since the events I have related I have utterly failed to hit on any reasonable explanation thereof. The only atmospherical phenomenon I can recall within the period was that nearly the whole time was a season of hard and bitter frosts, and, consequently, almost entirely windless air. There were several days of gales, rain, and floods in the third week of February, which

happened to form the first in several of peace for us. Therefore it was not caused by wind. What was the cause? As I have said, I have never been able to guess. Only this, I know, that I never want to hear that sound again.

APPENDIX A.

ON THE WILD GOATS OF GREECE.

I HAVE purposely refrained in the foregoing chapters from entering into zoological questions,[1] and this for the double reason that not only would those interested in sport and travel object to finding lengthy dissertations on *species* and similar matters interfering with their amusement (if, as I hope, they can find amusement in this work), but also because, even those interested in natural history may find it convenient to have the matter which appeals to them collected ready to their hand.

In the days of Homer wild goats were presumably found on most of the islands of the Ægean and Levant—at least on those with which the Greeks were familiar. The poet's description—

> "An isle crown'd with many a grove,
> Where savage goats through pathless thickets rove,
> No wretched hunters through the wintry cold
> Pursue their flight, but leave them safe to bound."
>
> —POPE'S *Translation.*

must have applied to many of them, especially in the Cyclades and Sporades. The following reference alludes particularly to the large numbers of these goats:—

> "Rous'd by the woodland nymphs, at early dawn
> The mountain goats come bounding o'er the lawn;
> In haste our fellows to the ships repair
> For arms and weapons of the sylvan war;

[1] Except in chapter xxxiii.

Straight in three squadrons all our crew we part,
And bend the bow, or wing the missile dart.
For bounteous gods afford a copious prey,
And nine fat goats each vessel bears away ;
The royal bark had ten."

—POPE'S *Translation.*

A hundred and eighteen goats (for there were thirteen ships in all) must have been a record bag even then !

It has till recently been considered that the animal referred to by Homer was invariably the *Capra ægagrus*, or, as it is perhaps less pedantic to call it, the Grecian ibex (though some may object again that it is neither a true ibex nor confined to Greece). In one case it certainly was, and that is in the description of the bow of Pandarus :—

" Won from a mountain ibex, which himself
In ambush lurking, through the breast had shot ;
True to his aim, as from behind a crag
He came in sight : prone on the rock he fell,
With horns of sixteen palms his head was crowned."

—LORD DERBY'S *Translation.*

It is also generally assumed that this goat is necessarily the ancestor of our domestic goats; and furthermore, even by good naturalists, that all the wild goats now found in Greece are either cross-breds between the Levantine ibex and the common goat, or even merely common goats run wild. In venturing to differ from some very well-known authorities, may I plead that, at all events, I base my ideas on personal observation, which, I think, will be allowed always to carry a certain amount of weight. The opportunities which I have had for studying these animals have already been fully detailed.

To deal firstly with the question of feral goats. These no doubt are plentiful on more of the islands than is generally known. I can, either from personal knowledge or reliable information, speak to their present, or recent, existence on Skyros, on Polinos near Milo, on Antiparos or the neighbouring islet of Spotiko, on Nikaria (Ikaros), on Naxos, and on Mount Baffavento in Cyprus. Those on Skopelos, Cerigotto, and Oxia have all been killed off recently. I have no doubt that a systematic examination of the remoter

islands would result in their being found in many other places. (To undertake such examination is a project of mine, perhaps not likely ever to be fulfilled.) These feral goats, however, are distinguished as such even by the natives. They are small, and carry small horns. The most casual observer could not mistake them for a really wild breed of goat.

The original wild goat of Southern Greece, including Crete, was certainly *Capra ægagrus*. This animal crosses readily with the domestic goat (*C. hircus*), and the produce is fertile. Thus the wild goats of Crete are cross-bred (in places, at least), and specimens so cross-bred are to be seen in the Bosnian Zoological Gardens at Ilidže.

The results of cross-breeding can be well observed at Antimilo. On my first visit to the island I assumed the ibex there to be a pure breed, having been falsely informed by the shepherds that there had never been any tame goats on the island. Moreover, the buck I then shot was hardly old enough for his horns to have any definite character; and the second, which I obtained alive (as already related), was distinctly *C. ægagrus*. By the light of more recent information, and of my own observation on my second visit, I am now of opinion that the original breed of ibex (*C. ægagrus*) on Antimilo has been crossed with the tame goat (*C. hircus*) at a comparatively recent period, and that the influence of the latter on the stock of animals now remaining is very marked. It accounts, as I have already said, for the black goats to be seen there, as well as for those with white patches. Especially, however, is its effect marked on the horns of the bucks, to which it gives an outward twist at the tips. But it does not—and this is important—alter the horn-cores nor the position of the sword-like anterior edge of the horns at the skull.

Moreover, the introduction of the domestic goat must have been so recent there that the ibex type of horn frequently persists in its original purity, as evidenced in the fine twenty-seven-inch head obtained by Mr H. Toppin in November 1898, in which one horn curves in one plane and the other turns in at the tip, and in a twenty-four-inch head obtained by me in which one horn curves in one plane (though the

other turns out a little); whereas two heads under twenty inches killed by me curve out most markedly at the tips, though their original owners were in other respects typical old Grecian ibex bucks, very grey (almost white), with a deep black shoulder-stripe.

To come now to the goats of Joura. All (with one exception referable to the existence of a few domestic goats on the island at one period) show the distinctive colouring of *C. ægagrus*. The old bucks—I had only had the opportunity of observing two—were grey (they seemed more blue-grey than those of Antimilo), the does brown with black markings. But, on the other hand, the horns of the bucks are quite different from those of *C. ægagrus*. The anterior edges face one another at the skull and then twist outwards. This remark applies to all I have seen living or dead. There are, moreover, very marked differences in the skulls of the two animals which the most casual observer must notice. The horn-cores are cylindrical, or nearly so, whereas in *C. ægagrus* they are uniformally sabre-shaped. Lastly, the goat of Joura has an alarm note, which is not the case with that of Antimilo.

The natural history collection in the Athens University throws no light on this subject, the only specimen there being labelled as "from Milo," but it is an Antimilo ibex. What is, however, more important to our purpose, is the large number of metal and plaster statuettes in the National Museum. There are many of goats; and it is certain that in some cases the artist must have aimed at the wild animal with which he was familiar, for stags, roes, &c., are well represented. None of these statuettes in any way suggest the typical Grecian ibex,[1] but several—I might almost say many—show the horn formation of the Joura goat. Again, on a tomb in the same collection is a hunting scene, in which the wild goats are certainly not *C. ægagrus*. This seems to me to prove fairly conclusively that the ancient Greeks were familiar with a wild goat which is not that of Asia. The value of these antique statuettes in the Athens National Collection is

[1] I only know one antique (and very correct) representation of this animal, and this is on a plate figured by Cesnola, and called by him "Plate with deer." Strange to say, it was found in Cyprus.

curiously illustrated by a reference to Mr Lydekker's *Wild Oxen, Sheep, and Goats.* In this he mentions the legend—it is little more—that the moufflon (*Ovis musimon*) once existed in Greece. Now in the above-mentioned collection there is a perfect statuette of a moufflon ram! This goes a long way to prove what otherwise rests on little more than a tradition, the source of which it is hard to trace.

Professor Büchner, of St Petersburg, who is a great authority in such matters, has pronounced his opinion that the Joura goat is a domestic goat run wild. That the specimens seen by him (at Berlin) were such, there can be no reasonable doubt. Had they been really Joura ibex, the Professor would at once have remarked on the difference between them and Reichenow's picture, which neither resembles those I saw in Joura nor that now living in the Zoological Society's Gardens.[1] It seems very possible that feral goats were sent to Berlin as Joura ibex, especially when we remember that they exist at Skyro and, till recently at all events, at Skopelos—the two nearest islands with steamer-ports to Joura. Moreover, the possibility of feral goats being actually secured on Joura itself is not to be excluded, for Professor Knotek saw seven domestic goats there in 1896; and they have possibly crossed at some time with the ibex—or at any rate run wild.

Dr Erhardt is said to agree with Professor Büchner, but in his *Fauna der Cycladen* (page 39) he expresses an opposite opinion, though, curiously enough, he considered the Joura goat to be identical with the Cretan one. He particularly notes—writing, moreover, many years ago—the distinctive shape of the horns of the former, and, I may add, correctly describes a young buck as they are now to be seen there.

It must be remembered that he was in Greece, though never at Joura. (To make confusion worse confounded, he also describes a feral goat from the other Joura, near Delos.) The peculiar colouring of his Antimilo specimen led him to consider it a separate species, to which he gave the name of *Ægroceros pictus.* This, however, was really attributable to the presence on the island of domestic goats, and the resulting crosses.

[1] Since dead.

With the recollection of the goats of Joura fresh in my mind, I have made it my business to again examine the specimen labelled *C. dorcas* at the Zoological Gardens in Regent's Park. It is my opinion that it is a genuine specimen. It seems rather small for its colouring, which is that of an adult buck (say about five years old), but this may be the result of a life of captivity.[1]

I am obliged to Mr Lydekker for the suggestion that possibly the true Joura goat may be a local sub-species of *C. ægagrus*, varying only in the shape of the horn (for I do not attach any weight to the alleged greater length of the hair, after my experience of the severe weather of a Joura winter). This, as Erhardt truly says, "suggests that of a ram." In one old buck now at Joura the horns hardly rise at all, but twist outwards in a direction almost horizontal with their first processes.

If this theory be rejected, we are driven back on one of two others, viz. :—

(1) The goats of Joura are simply and purely domestic goats run wild, which in the process of time have developed a constant type exactly resembling, except in horn-formation, the *Capra ægagrus*. Or,

(2) The goats of Joura are a cross-bred race between the original *C. ægagrus* of the island and the domestic goat (*C. hircus*).

To take the latter hypothesis first. At Antimilo we find a race of wild goats which can be proved to be so produced. We find there that in such a race we have—

(*a*) Horns generally speaking of *C. ægagrus* type, but turned out at the tips only, skull and horn-cores being unaltered.

(*b*) Violent differences in colour—black goats, white-marked goats, &c., being fairly common.

(*c*) In my opinion, a more "goaty" appearance, in the does particularly, than in those of Joura.

The first two of these points are certain, and incapable of denial. The odd-coloured buck to which I have referred as being at Joura may even be a "sport" of colour, but is more probably referable to a recent cross with the domestic goats

[1] See note, page 395.

which were on the island a few years ago. It is true Professor Knotek speaks of "cross-bred *goats*," but he may, after all, only have seen this one, possibly several times.

Dr Lorenz Liburnau accepts the other theory, but he says: "If circumstances make it probable that the goats of Joura owe their origin principally, perhaps solely, to domestic goats run wild, it must be honestly admitted that this is by no means proved with certainty, nor is it capable of such proof." He goes on to say that the opposite theory—*i.e.*, that the Joura goat is a good species—can only be proved by the discovery of the remains of goats dating from the pre-human period, and absolutely identical with the goats of Joura. To me it appears that there is another possible proof which he has overlooked, and that lies in the wild goats of Samothrace.

According to Danford, *P.Z.S.*, 1875, p. 459, these goats are *C. ægagrus;* but Dr Kruper told Herr Reiser in Athens that on the contrary many specimens, both alive and dead, have reached Athens, and are *absolutely identical with the wild goats of Joura.* This is a point which I hope to elucidate personally at an early date; and if it proves, as I believe it will, that Dr Kruper is correct, can we really be seriously asked to believe that in two islands a considerable distance apart, mere feral goats have set up a distinct and exactly similar type resembling *C. ægagrus* except in skull and horn-formation?

When Dr Reichenow first brought the wild goat of Joura to the knowledge of naturalists he gave it the name of *Capra dorcas.* This name, however, had long before been given by Linnæus to the Dorcas Gazelle. It was, however, never questioned, as it was generally considered that the Joura goat was a cross-bred animal. I trust I have satisfied the reader that this is not the case, and that this animal is, if not a species by itself, at least a local variety, for which I have ventured to suggest, in a paper recently read at the Zoological Society, the name of *Capra ægagrus* var. *Gerontiensis*, or if the trinomial system, which seems destined to come into general use, be adopted, *Capra ægagrus Gerontiensis.*

APPENDIX B.

ON THE ANNIHILATION OF BIG GAME IN GREECE.

THE term "Big Game," though hardly expressing my meaning of game that is suited to the rifle, seems to be the only expression applicable. (The German *Haarwild* would be better, did it not include the fox and the hare.) Of such game Greece has, or had till recently, a good many varieties. There were red-deer, with a range extending from Olympus to the west coast, fallow-deer on the Adramyttian Gulf, chamois on the higher mountains (one in the Athens University Museum is described as killed not many years ago), roe-deer in many parts, Grecian ibex on Antimilo, a similar animal on Joura, feral goats on many of the islands, wild boar pretty widely distributed, feral pig on Eubœa, and lastly, wolves certainly, and bears probably, on Olympus and the Turkish frontier generally. Of such a list any country might be proud, and, if exceedingly rare animals are counted, it might be extended. For instance there is a European lynx from the Morea in the collection above referred to. Until 1897 these various animals had a fair chance of holding their own. The Greeks, it is true, killed them when they could, irrespective of season or sex, but their weapons, mostly long-barrelled converted flint-lock muskets, were indifferent, and their ammunition worse. Now all this has been changed. At the time of the Turkish War[1] some patriotically-minded, but very misguided, individuals, thinking that the Greek people would fly to arms, flooded the country with an enormous number of Gras rifles, originally in use in the French army.

[1] Not the recent war.

These were sold for a song, or given away to all comers. The war proved the volunteers who did go to the front to be by no means the worst of Greek troops, but comparatively few did go; and when the war was over the rifles were retained by the people, and are now, as a matter of fact, to be bought anywhere for a few francs. Every peasant who has any chance of shooting has one, and they are freely used as shot-guns.

Now let me give a few examples from my own experience. Towards the end of November 1898 a friend and I left England for Greece on a shooting trip. The objects of our quest were threefold—firstly, the ibex of Antimilo; secondly, those of Joura; and thirdly, the fallow-deer of the Adramyttian Gulf. Of the first only I had previous experience; of the second I knew that they were protected by Government, and that Herr Reiser had seen plenty in 1895; while of the third I knew that they had been protected by the Government for years.

Taking Antimilo first, as it was the first place we visited, I found a great change had taken place. It is true that in some eight years previously to my first visit the shepherd and his son had reduced the ibex from some eight hundred to about one hundred. But between Herr Reiser's visit in 1895 and mine in 1897 there had been no substantial decrease, owing principally to the badness of the shepherd's guns when real stalking became necessary. Now they had each a Gras rifle. The number of ibex had sunk from one hundred to a third of that number. Of seven great bucks I had seen together, possibly one had remained till it was shot by an English officer just before my visit; but the heads of the others were lying about the shepherd's hut—or rather the chopped-off horns, for nothing edible is wasted. Probably the Antimilo ibex are extinct to-day.

At Joura it was the same story. Count von der Mühle, writing in 1844, says the ibex there were so plentiful that Greek soldiers who took refuge there in 1839 killed a score or so with their bayonets. In comparatively recent times there were six to eight hundred left. Reiser's party, who easily bagged three, estimated them at two hundred to two hundred and fifty in 1895. At Christmas 1898, we authenticated fifteen (or possibly seventeen) ibex on this island, but as it is

eight miles long there may have been half as many more we did not see during our week's stay on the island. Relays of charcoal-burners armed with Gras rifles had been continually shooting since the war; and unless they have since found the paucity of goats has made the game not worth the candle, they have probably now exterminated them also.

Now as to the fallow-deer. I had applied through our Legation at Athens for a special permit to shoot one or two bucks, and to the consul at Patras for further information. The latter wrote:—

"The exact spot where fallow-deer are (or rather were) to be found is Pandelimona, a few miles on the Missolonghi side of Astaco; but it is certainly not worth your while to make the attempt. I am fond of shooting myself, and we used occasionally to see a fallow-deer in that neighbourhood about fifteen years ago, but since then, notwithstanding the prohibition, the Greek peasants have wellnigh exterminated the species, as they are armed with breech-loading Gras rifles. All last season, say from the middle of November to the end of March, the officers of the British fleet, who go through a torpedo course in a little bay near Pandelimona, roamed all over the hills in the vicinity, and never saw a fallow-deer;[1] in fact, so far as I know, the species may practically be considered as extinct."

After this it is needless to say that we did not go to Astaco. It is possible, nevertheless, that a few of these deer remain further inland; and if so, energetic measures might even now save them. To the sportsman or naturalist they are most interesting, as being the only wild (in contradistinction to feral) fallow-deer in Europe with the exception of the Sardinian ones. Judging from a head in the Athens University—in velvet, as all the heads there are—they must carry exceptionally fine and somewhat peculiar horns.

How it may be with the red-deer and chamois in Greece I cannot, from personal experience, say; but it is easy to

[1] When I published this letter in *The Field*, a naval officer wrote to say that, although he must admit its general correctness, he had, as a matter of fact, seen one very fine deer during the 1898-9 season. It was not very clear whether he meant a fallow- or red-deer, however. Red-deer were formerly known on the hills north of Pandelimona.

guess. It can only be hoped that some endeavour may be made to protect the harmless wild animals of that country by a few years' close time, rigidly enforced. Till the end of that close time I cannot advise any English sportsman to go there.

My attention has recently been called by an article, written by a Greek, to the recent existence of an interesting feral animal in that country. The writer says:—

"Even more regrettable is the total extinction of a herd of some five or six hundred wild oxen which roamed until quite recently in the trackless reed-beds around Lake Copais. They were gradually exterminated by peasants who used to lie in ambush in the shallows of the lake, and who sold the carcases of those noble beasts in the market-place of Levadia as 'wild beef.' The draining of the lake and the burning of the reeds saw the last of them."

Note.—The above facts may be advantageously brought to the consideration of the Australian Government, which is now issuing licences, *without limit of numbers*, authorising the licensee to shoot the fine feral buffalo of Melville Island and the northern coast. It is true there is a prohibition against shooting cows and calves, but practically no steps are taken to enforce this.

APPENDIX C.

THE SPORTSMAN'S RIFLE-SIGHT.

In a previous work[1] I have devoted a chapter to the question of the length of rifle-barrels and the advantages that the modern sportsman had in being able to reduce the weight of his weapon, without decreasing its efficiency, by shortening them.

I pointed out, on that occasion, that one objection that had been raised to the shortening of barrels was that it brought the fore and back sights so near together as to make accurate alignment difficult, and that this difficulty had been overcome by the invention of the orthoptic sight.

In my last book, *The Roedeer*, I referred briefly to the sight I had myself invented for short-barrelled sporting rifles, and christened the "Snaffle" sight. Any gunmaker can fix this sight on any rifle, as it merely consists of a fairly strong ring of metal topping a short screw.

The principle of the sight is based on the following theory. As a rule, game is killed at a range of not over 200 yards, and at this range a fixed sight is all that the sportsman can want. Personally I find that when medium-sized game, say a red-deer, is over 200 yards from me, an ordinary foresight covers too much of the animal for me to aim accurately at the proper spot. I am, of course, aware that telescopic sights do away with this difficulty, but in rough countries a rifle cannot be too simple. Therefore the "Snaffle" sight is screwed in and adjusted to point-blank range, and in my experience that is all that is necessary. I find that with this,

[1] *The Snaffle Papers.*

and using the ·400-bore rifle and "Axite" powder, it is really not necessary to do more than bring the bead on any animal at a distance of anything less than a furlong, and perhaps a bit farther. As a concession to human weakness, I have a slot cut in the top of the ring, the use of which means a range of 500 yards or so, but I have never had occasion to use it.

Not long ago I read in an American sporting magazine (and the Americans know pretty well what is wanted in sporting rifles) that "an objection to some of the orthoptic sights now on the market is their liability to accidental swinging, forward or backward, from the perpendicular position, with a consequent certainty of undershooting." There certainly can be no risk of this with the "Snaffle" sight.

Another objection has been that these sights were too near the eye and might be dangerous. That also ceases to exist with my sight, as the best place to put it will be found to be on the breech of the rifle, just in front of the doll's head on an ordinary double rifle.

The reader must not imagine that I am sufficiently presumptuous to write of my invention as *the* sportsman's rifle-sight. What I consider so is a recent improvement in all orthoptic sights, which I have hastened to apply to all my own, and for the idea of which I was originally indebted to Mr Rigby. It consists simply in enlarging the aperture of the rear-sight. I find that, instead of the pin-hole with which we were formerly familiar, a hole one-eighth of an inch in diameter gives the best results.

I cannot do better than again quote an American writer, Mr Claud King. He says:—

"When sights of this class were first introduced, riflemen were slow to understand the principle involved. In spite of argument and demonstration, they could not believe accurate shooting possible with a sight through which could be seen not only the bead and target, but also the entire rifle-barrel as well, and a circle of ten or a hundred yards circumjacent to the object of aim. It was quite beyond their comprehension, and it is more than likely that the inventor reduced the size of the aperture more than he otherwise would in deference to their prejudice. But the test of years has proven

that such reduction was unnecessary; that the centre of a circle remains the same, irrespective of its diameter, and that the eye will invariably find it in sighting, unless intentionally diverted. With the old style open sight the mind of the shooter was needfully concentrated upon "drawing down in the notch," with the orthoptic sight the proper thing is to forget that you are looking through it. Concern yourself only with the front bead and the game, and the rifle—if it is accurate and properly trained—will do the rest."

These lines were published more than five years after the first "Snaffle" sight was made, but it is the first time I have ever seen anything in print on this important subject. The orthoptic sight with the large aperture is, to my mind, *the* sportsman's rifle-sight, whether he agrees with me or not as to the sufficiency of a fixed sight like the "Snaffle" sight.

Lest the reader may erroneously suppose that I have any interest in the manufacture or sale of rifle-sights, I may add that these sights may be made or fitted by any gunmaker, and that my only interest lies in the kindly letters I sometimes receive from those who use them. Such a one wrote to me from the Deccan: "I bless the day you advised me to use your sight."

APPENDIX D.

SPORTING RIFLES AND AMMUNITION.

It has been my practice, in each of my books, to say something anent sporting rifles—if only to show that I was not unwilling to move with the times. I cannot help smiling when I re-read my warm advocacy, in my first work, of the old 12-bore rifle; but, indeed, it is no bad weapon even now.

In a later work I find the following:—

"A ·400-bore rifle, carrying a hollow-pointed bullet not under 350 grains weight, and burning about 48 grains of smokeless powder, will, in my opinion, be the all-round sporting rifle of the future."

These words were written some seventeen years ago; and except that I slightly underestimated the powder charge, the ideas I then expressed have been triumphantly vindicated. The double ·400-bore is still the rifle I recommend to young sportsmen, and it is especially suitable for India. It is true that it has been a good deal superseded by the cheaper magazine rifle of almost identical calibre; but I have always protested against the use of these, holding them to be essentially military, and not sporting, weapons.[1] I am aware that I here

[1] Mr Leslie Taylor, who has been kind enough to look over this Appendix, with a view to giving me the benefit of his superior knowledge, writes: "It (the ·400-bore rifle) has not been superseded, as you state, on account of the introduction of magazine rifles, but because cartridges of superior calibre, fired by double rifles alone, have been introduced. A brief note that the ·465 and the ·476 have been subsequently introduced as improvements upon this bore would put you right." Mr Taylor has possibly overlooked the point that my recommendation was that of the ·400 as an *all-round rifle*, and even that bore, as the reader of the foregoing pages has noticed, is unnecessarily powerful for such game as wild sheep.

take up a position not logically defensible, for, using my own double (ejector) rifle, I can, by holding two spare cartridges between the fingers of my left hand, put off four shots as fast as the user of any magazine weapon can do. But the mere action of reloading reduces the tendency to rapid and unconsidered firing.

Few things in the history of the sporting rifle are more curious than the almost total cessation of advance made which followed the invention of the express principle, and which lasted for something like twenty years. Of course, I must not be supposed to mean that there were no minor improvements, but on broad lines the seventies and eighties were a blank in the history of the sportsman's weapon.

Thus the "Old Shekarry" (Major Levison), writing in '67, advocated the use of the Westley-Richards breech-loader, but he recommended the 12-bore rifle for general use, although only the previous year he seems to have used a "Whitworth small-bore" with deadly effect at chamois, and at ranges which would be unusually long even at the present day. Only a year or two later Captain Forsyth revoked everything he had written in his book on sporting rifles (published '66 or '67), and unhesitatingly advocated the ·500 express; and for twenty good years the ·500 express, perhaps the poorest of all rifles, ruled the roost. In those twenty years improvements were made in actions and similar matters of detail only. In fact, the only inventions of real importance falling within that period were those of the shot-and-ball gun and of the orthoptic sight (in its modern form).

With the late eighties came a revolution in military rifles everywhere, and small-bore (under one-third of an inch in diameter) weapons were taken into use by all the Great Powers. The rifles burned various nitro-compounds (miscalled "smokeless" powders in England alone), which exerted high pressures on the breech of the rifle, but also ensured high initial velocity and low trajectory. Moreover, the cartridges were much lighter than the old kind—an important point to the soldier. These new military rifles were from the first looked upon askance by the practical sportsman, who at once correctly attributed to those defects, which they have since been found in practice to have—viz., Want of shock and

stopping power, and insufficiency of blood-letting for tracking purposes. The two former the English Government has vainly been trying to remedy by the creation of an expanding bullet—which shall not fall under the ban of the Geneva Convention[1]—but has, so far, only succeeded in attracting hearty expressions of ill-will from those who may reasonably expect to become targets for our bullets some day. The sportsman, less limited, had no difficulty in arriving at a variety of designs which did, as a matter of fact, greatly increase the efficiency of the projectiles of these small-bore rifles, and it is probably no exaggeration to say that every description of big game has been shot with the ·303. Rhino, buffalo, bison, lions, tigers, leopards, and bears of all sorts certainly have, and, if I cannot actually authenticate the shooting of elephants therewith, I certainly can with the Italian military rifle of still smaller calibre. Yet the ·303 has never been the sportsman's favoured weapon. What he wants is less the penetration that will go right through an elephant's skull than the crashing blow which will knock that animal out of time (even if the aim is not exactly true) for long enough to enable him to get behind a tree, or to mount his horse, as the case may be. This the ·303, in spite of the various methods above referred to, did not do. Splitting the envelope of the lead, removing part of it at the point, and other devices, did certainly cause the ·303 bullet to inflict larger wounds and to let more blood, but there was little, if any, increased shock.

Recently, however, we have attained a very different state of things. Mr Leslie B. Taylor, the well-known Managing Director of Westley-Richards' Works at Bournbrook, has invented a projectile which is quite a new departure, and one not easily described without illustrations. The lead bullet, nickel-covered of course, has a slightly hollowed point, but whereas the hollow in the point of the leaden bullet is formed by a tube placed within its nose, the hollow in the "L. T." bullet (as it is called) is effected by dividing the outer envelope, for which the forward division, which may either be of nickel or copper, provides the means. Between

[1] As a matter of fact there is no reference to bullets in the Geneva Convention, but this is the popular way of putting the matter.

the two hollows there is an interval containing nothing but air. The effect of the presence of this air is, on impact, totally to change the conditions. This bullet—instead of, like the old ·303, going in at a small hole and clean through with practically no shock—"sets up" at once, enters by a hole a good deal larger than the bullet, and inflicts (I quote Mr Percy Easte, M.R.C.V.S., who conducted a series of tests on large animals) "the greatest possible amount of damage, both on hard and soft tissues, with great shocking power and not too much penetration." This is exactly what the sportsman wants; and it makes the ·303 what it was not before, a reliable weapon for use at dangerous game.

The fact, however, that the importation of rifles of this bore into India was prohibited, together with other reasons into which it is beyond the scope of these pages to enter, decided Mr Taylor to push the matter further; and the result of his experiments has been the devolution of the ·318-bore Accelerated Express, which may be taken as the "last word" in sporting rifles, and as to the details of which I quote his own words at the end of this Appendix.

The sporting rifle might have been said, until comparatively recently, to occupy the proverbial position of the man between two stools, these being the old-fashioned Express rifle and the modern high-velocity weapon respectively. Neither of these altogether fulfils a sportsman's requirements, although the former did so until we realised that something better could be obtained, which we did on the introduction of the latter class of weapon. Rifles of this latter class have been fully dealt with above. I propose now only to consider their drawbacks from the sportsman's point of view, and of which their ammunition was the cause. These are (1) unreliability, (2) difficulty of cleaning, and (3) shortlivedness.

The most reliable of the English nitro-compounds was undeniably Cordite; and after the first few years of its manufacture it was, and is, made as nearly perfection in this respect as may be. One difficulty, however, there has always been with it, and that is the effect of changes of temperature on it. A great deal, practically all, of the really big game shot nowadays is killed in hot countries, and it is exactly heat that most affects Cordite.

Now we come to the second point—the difficulty of keeping clean rifles of the modern type. Taking Cordite again, we find that there is only one possibility of keeping rifles used with this powder in fair order. This consists in pouring boiling water through them after use, and then wiping them with Rangoon oil. But are we to go out shooting as Facey Romford said ladies ought to go hunting—with a tea-kettle tacked to their saddles? The old Express rifles, after all, gave very little trouble; and at a push, if it was a case of bivouac, they might even be left dirty twenty-four hours. My own plan has always been to carry an oily wiper, and pull it through as soon as possible after firing. If this was done, a rifle could be left a week. But these rough-and-ready dodges will not do for modern rifles, and that is a great drawback to a sportsman.

Then, again, the old rifles never wore out. Some men, who were great believers in practice, fired hundreds of shots in the year, and at the end of ten years their rifles were as good as ever. Would this be the case with a ·303, especially considering the extra scrubbing necessary to keep the barrel clean?

What was wanted, therefore, was a smokeless powder that would avoid these defects, and this Messrs Kynoch have now provided for sportsmen in what they call "Axite." To take the objections which I have already made against the nitro-compounds *seriatim*, I find that—

Firstly, Axite—which, by the way, I may say has the advantages of giving greater velocity and therefore flatter trajectory, and also greater accuracy—is not affected by heat as Cordite is. Batches of cartridges of the two powders were equally heated to 110° Fahrenheit for one hour, and then fired for pressure. Cordite showed an increased pressure of a ton and a half to the square inch, Axite exactly half as much. The test is, of course, for the sportsman's purposes, absurdly excessive. Therefore we may take it that for such purposes Axite is so little affected by temperature that the point ceases to be worthy of consideration.

As regards the second point, experience has proved that Axite does not corrode the barrel in the same way as Cordite. A rifle has been fired ten times with the former powder, and then left for twenty hours, when it has been found to be in

the same condition as directly after firing. When wiped out with a piece of cloth it was found to be absolutely uninjured.

When we come to the last point, we find that not only is the flame temperature greatly lower with Axite than with Cordite, but the total heat of decomposition is nearly one-fifth less. Its *erosive* effect is therefore much less than that of Cordite. Again the residue deposit of Axite, instead of being deleterious to the barrel, is actually beneficent. It is actually of a lubricating nature, as can be proved by firing Axite first and Cordite afterwards from the same barrel. The Cordite cartridge will then show an increased velocity of something like 50 feet per second. Moreover, whereas the use of Cordite giving high velocities nickels the barrel by excessive friction, Axite does not. I have therefore no hesitation in saying that a rifle used with Axite alone should have a greatly longer life than any high-velocity weapon has hitherto had.

I have thus dealt with my three points. As a sportsman's powder Axite stands alone; and in my opinion Messrs Kynoch are warranted in saying that they believe it to be without a rival.

No one would be rash enough to say that a very few years may not produce wonderful results in the way of inventions. It may be, though it seems unlikely, that a smokeless powder will be produced which will far excel Axite for sporting purposes. It may be that electricity will be sufficiently understood to place a kind of portable lightning at the disposal of the sportsman. It may be, and this is more likely than all, that before the new century is half gone all the big game of the world will have followed the way of the American bison. But in any case these two inventions are the most important ones of recent date. Moreover, and this is to my mind a great point, they are not what I call "faddy" improvements. We have had a great deal too much of these in recent years, when one firm of gunmakers after another has brought out a new high-velocity rifle, generally differing just enough from its predecessor to make it impossible to interchange the cartridges. The multiplicity of cartridges is an undesired evil to the travelling sportsman, of which we had more than enough in the days of the Express. Messrs Westley-Richards' Patent Bullet and Messrs Kynochs' Axite Powder are for all

bores of high-velocity rifles. This is a real advance "all along the line."

Note.—I have had so much to say in print on the question of double *versus* magazine rifles, that I am glad to be able here to quote from Mr Taylor's writings on the subject. He says:—

"The double-barrelled system of rifle undoubtedly has proved the most satisfactory type of deer-stalking weapon.

"Experience teaches that it displays the primary essential of successful stalking — viz., comparative noiselessness of manipulation.

"Two shots, aimed with accuracy, can be fired in quicker succession from a double rifle than two shots from any type of magazine rifle. The silence which experienced stalkers enjoin upon the sportsman is impossible in the reloading process of the noisy magazine rifle.

"With a double rifle a sportsman is enabled quickly to recover his aim and instantaneously to correct any error of direction.

"Smoothness and consistency of pull-off, upon which proficient marksmanship so largely depends, are best secured in the Westley-Richards modern double hammerless ejector rifles.

"The desiderata of shooting efficiency in a double-barrelled deer-stalking rifle lie in accurate and interdependent barrel, grouping, fineness of sighting, and flatness of bullet trajectory, combined with a bullet of effective weight and expansion or smashing power.

"The ·318 Accelerated Express rifle stands at the head of the small-bore series now in vogue. Its bullet weighs 250 grains, and surpasses in hitting force the light bullets of the ·256-bore, 140 grains; the ·275-bore, 140 grains; the ·280-bore, 160 grains; all of which err on the side of penetration without shock, and thereby widely depart from the essential qualities of a sporting bullet."

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